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Tactics

Combat can take place on land or at sea. However, different tactics for offensive and defensive situations arise when you consider the type of opponent you face, as well as the terrain that surrounds the battlefield.

Terrain

In addition to providing resources for your civilization, the terrain also determines the factors with which you will approach each game or scenario. The terrain can give you tactical advantage, such as naturally occurring choke points that your enemy must cross in order to reach your town. Terrain types could include narrow openings in the forest or narrow river crossings.

Water—Impassable by land units. Use a transport ship to cross these bodies of water.

Forest—Impassable. Forests can be cut to allow passage by Villagers.

Cliffs—Impassable by land units. Units occupying the high ground receive an attack bonus while units attacking from below suffer an attack penalty.

Reconnaissance

At the start of each game you should choose a unit to do some reconnaissance. Greeks should use the Kataskopos or Pegasus, Norse should use Ulfisks or the ravens of Odin, and Egyptians should use Priests to build Obelisks or converted animals. This serves two purposes: finding places to set up defensive fortifications, and keeping an eye on your opponent's progress.

Enemy buildings and walls are revealed only by exploring their location. Once you have explored an area, the buildings within will remain visible in the state in which you first encountered them. For example, you will not see any newly constructed buildings or improvements unless you return to scout the area.

Defensive Tactics

Once you have a feel for the lay of the land, it's time to plan some defensive fortifications. Walls are among the fastest and most economical ways to protect your town.

Walls

After exploring the area immediately surrounding your Town Center, you can start building walls. First determine how much space your city might need for future expansion. Also consider enclosing enough resources to keep you going for some time.

To build a wall

Select a Villager (or group of Villagers) and then click **Wall** on the Command panel. Click a starting point of the wall on the map. Move the pointer to the end of the wall segment and click. To ensure that walls ending in forests and cliffs are sealed off, drag your pointer past the area you want to enclose.

An outline of the wall appears, showing the position of the wall as you move the pointer. This outline will guide wall placement.



Press and hold SHIFT while clicking the endpoint of the wall to continue another wall segment from the endpoint. When the wall has ended, right-click to stop building.

Placing towers at intervals behind walls will provide additional protection against attack. In addition to a ranged attack (Sentry Towers do not attack), Watch Towers also provide a safe haven for your units to garrison when your town is attacked.

Garrisoned Units

Garrisoning units inside buildings keeps them safe from attack and gives the building an attack bonus. However, if the building is destroyed, the units are ejected from the structure.

Only Villagers, archers, and infantry can garrison in most buildings. Siege and cavalry units can garrison inside the buildings they are created in, but once they leave they cannot reenter the building.

To garrison units

Select the unit(s) to be garrisoned, click Garrison on the command panel.



Buildings fly a flag when units are garrisoned inside.

Garrisoned Relics

While exploring the terrain you may encounter relics. Relics grant bonus to the civilization that controls them. It may be an economic or military bonus. For a description of the bonus, place your pointer over the relic to display a tooltip. The tooltip describes the relic and the bonus it grants.

To control the relic and benefit from its civilization bonus, it must be garrisoned in a temple. Only hero units can retrieve and garrison relics. Egyptian civilizations must use the Pharaoh to retrieve relics.

To garrison relics

Select a hero and then right-click a relic. Once the relic has been collected, right-click a temple to garrison the relic inside. Once the relic is garrisoned, you start to receive its bonus.



Controlling all the relics on a map does not cause a victory condition in Age of Mythology.

Ringing the Town Bell

If the worst has happened and the enemy has breached your walls and assaulted your town, it's time to ring the town bell. Ringing the town bell causes all Villagers to stop what they're doing and garrison inside the nearest available building. Garrisoned Villagers attack the enemy while protected within the buildings. If there is not enough room for all the Villagers to garrison, those that are left will continue what they were doing.

To ring the town bell

Select the Town Center and then click the **Ring Town Bell** icon on the command panel.

After the invaders are repelled, click **Return to Work** to send the Villagers back to the tasks they were doing when the alarm sounded.

Offensive Tactics

You've taken care of the homeland defense and now it's time to inflict some damage on the enemy.

Moving Units

Selecting two or more units to move or attack causes them to move automatically into a logical formation with the strongest units out front and the weakest units protected in the rear. For example, archers will march behind infantry for the protection they offer.

Using Waypoints

Setting waypoints allows you to control the path that your troops take into battle, thus avoiding strong defensive positions or surprising the enemy by attacking their flanks. To order movement along waypoints, select the group of soldiers you want to move, and then press and hold SHIFT while clicking each point along the path you want them to travel. Your units start traveling along the path immediately.

To assign more waypoints to a unit already traveling by waypoints, select the unit, and then press and hold SHIFT while clicking additional waypoints.

Transporting Across Water

If you need to cross a body of water to engage your enemies, you must load your army onto transport ships. Transport ships are created at a Dock and allow any unit to board them for transport across water.



Some Age of Mythology civilizations have airborne transport units.

Grouping Units

While your army travels, you can monitor its progress and attend to other duties if the army is grouped under a banner.

A grouped army is easy to locate and control. With grouped units, you can simultaneously command several different types of forces.

To group units

Select the units to group, and then right-click on an available banner to group the units under.

To command those units again, simply click the banner. The main view will center on the selected group. In addition to making your military more efficient, resource gathering groups can benefit from grouping as well.

Unit producing buildings can set a banner as a gather point to add their newly created units to a group.

Attacking

Now that your army is ready to engage the enemy, it's time to order the attack. When you initiate an attack, your archers and siege units will start attacking from range, while the swordsmen or cavalry will close on the target. The combat stance of your units will determine how far they go in the attack. There are two possible combat stances:

Aggressive Stance—Units with this stance will attack any enemy unit or building on sight, and will pursue an enemy unit until they or the enemy are destroyed.

Defensive Stance—Units with this stance will attack any enemy unit or building on sight, but they will not pursue them if they flee.

To view the combat stance of any unit, select the unit, and then click the **Stance** icon on the command panel.



Most units are created with an aggressive combat stance.

To attack

Select a Villager or military unit(s) and then right-click an enemy unit or building.

Attacking Tips

- Siege units are devastating against buildings, but vulnerable to attack.
- Myth units are powerful, but a hero can make short work of them.
- Egyptian Priests can heal allied units.
- Norse soldiers should attack often and early to generate favor.
- Only ranged units can attack flying units.

Unit types will have varying degrees of success in battle against other unit types. For example, archers are strong against infantry but weak when fighting cavalry. The rollover help for a unit will suggest which unit types it is best prepared to fight.

Using the Market and Diplomacy

Create trade caravans and trade resources at the Market to generate additional resources. Use diplomacy as a weapon to achieve dominance.

Trade Caravans

A trade caravan is an economic unit. Send a trade caravan to any Town Center to generate a payment of gold. The farther the journey distance, the greater the gold payment. Trade must be between a Market and Town Center. For example, you cannot have a trade route between two Markets.

Each civilization in *Age of Mythology* has a unique trade caravan.

To create a trade caravan, at the Market, click the **Trade Caravan** icon, select the new trade caravan, and then right-click on any Town Center.

The trade caravan will now move between the Town Center and the Market. Be aware that enemy forces and Town Centers will attack trade caravans. Research coinage at the Market to increase the speed at which the caravans travel.

Buy and Sell Resources

At the Market you can buy and sell food or wood. The exchange rate for purchases changes as the Market becomes flooded with any resource. For example, selling 1,000 wood will reduce the price the Market will pay to buy the wood.

Buying and selling resources can be vital to overcome a shortage of a resource that may be needed to purchase military units or to begin the advance to another age.

To trade resources, at the Market, click the desired buy/sell icon.

The exchange is credited immediately.

To stockpile resources, rapidly click a buy/sell icon multiple times. Select the tax collector improvement at the Market to reduce the cost of trading resources.

Tribute Other Players

Tribute can be paid to other players (computer and human) in the form of resources (gold, food, and wood) being sent to them. Tribute may not be paid to an enemy, but you can send tributes to neutral players. In an allied game, resource trading between allies allows for faster buildups and technology research.

Paying tribute costs resources for each transaction. However, in *Age of Mythology* tribute does not require a Market and can be paid in any age.

To pay tribute to another player, on the in-game menu, click the **Tribute** icon. Select another player, select which resource to send to that player, and then click **Send**.

To reduce the cost of paying tribute, research ambassadors at the Market.

Diplomacy

Diplomacy determines how game units react to units from other players. Players can set these options during the game to form or dissolve alliances. However, in a locked game the diplomacy options are only selected at the start of the game and cannot be changed. Diplomacy options are:

Ally—Your units defend the units and buildings of allied players as if they were your own. You cannot attack allied units or buildings.

Neutral—Your units ignore the units and buildings of neutral players unless you order them to attack. If your units are attacked by neutral units, your units defend themselves.

Enemy—Your units attack the units and buildings of enemy players who enter their line of sight. This is the default setting for diplomacy unless you began the game as a member of a team.

To select a diplomacy option, on the in-game menu, click the **Select Player** icon. Select another player, select your diplomatic stance toward that player, and then click **OK**.

Other players' diplomacy settings do not automatically match yours. If you set another player to ally, that player will still attack if they have you set to enemy.

Buildings

In *Age of Mythology*, buildings train units, serve as resource drop sites, and are where improvements can be researched. Buildings are built by Villagers or Norse infantry.

Buildings in Common



Armory

The Armory researches improvements in weapons and armor for military units, including ships and buildings with attack capabilities. Thor has a special armory.



Dock

The Dock builds fishing ships, transports, and war ships. Improvements to ships can be researched at the Dock.



Farm

Farms provide unlimited food, but food is gathered more slowly than fishing or hunting. Build Farms next to Town Centers or Granaries for quick food gathering.



Gate

Build a Gate in a wall to allow allied units access through the wall.



House

The House supports ten units of population. After ten Houses have been built, population must be expanded by building Town Centers.



Market

The Market creates trade caravans and allows resources to be bought and sold. Trade caravans travel between Town Centers, generating gold for a successful round-trip. Research improvements at the Market to reduce the cost or increase the profit of Market activities.



Sentry Tower

The Sentry Tower extends line of sight. It can be improved to fire arrows at enemies in range.

Improved towers or other fortifications might be placed at vital points such as river crossings or mountain passes where enemies would be forced to pass. The garrison of the guard tower was expected to fight and defend the fortification until help could arrive, as well as warn commanders of encroachments. Because such a fortification was usually placed at a vital position, an enemy could not afford to pass it by, leaving their retreat path blocked.



Town Center

The Town Center trains Villagers and hero units, stores resources, and acts as the hub of a city. Town centers can only be built on settlements. Additional Town Centers can be built starting in the Heroic Age. If a player claims all the settlements on a map, this is a win under standard victory conditions.

The rise of agriculture provided a food surplus that had to be collected and stored to be available in winter months and other periods when food was scarce. The need to collect, store, and protect food surpluses gave rise to the first towns as administrative centers. Towns quickly became engaged in many additional activities, including the gathering and storage of other resources, centers of manufacturing, population concentration points, and centers of trade.



Temple

The Temple trains myth units and researches mythological improvements from the gods. Favor is one of the resources required to train myth units. Each civilization earns favor in a unique manner.



Walls

Build Walls to protect a town, close off choke points, defend resources, or protect camps. Walls can be improved to stone walls, fortified walls, or citadel walls (Egyptian only) to increase their strength.

Humans have been fortifying their towns for defense since the first towns were built over 10,000 years ago. Walls were built to keep out human enemies and protect food supplies needed to support the town during winter. Wall materials depended on what was available, including logs in northern forests or mud bricks in the Middle East. The preferred wall material, when available, was stone. It would not burn like wood and was much more difficult to break than bricks.

A further improvement in walls was to build citadels at intervals along the wall, not just at corners. Citadels were points of extra strength, protecting both staircases down into the town and concentrations of defenders. Climbing attackers could be placed under fire from multiple citadels, as well as the wall face. If attackers got onto the wall, they could not get into the town without taking a citadel first.



Wonder

The expensive Wonder proclaims the glory and superiority of a civilization. In some Age of Mythology games, a completed Wonder starts a countdown clock that will lead to an automatic win if you can defend it until the timer expires.

Greek Buildings



Archery Range

The Archery Range trains archer and counter-archer units. Improvements to archers may be researched at the Archery Range.



Fortress

The Fortress provides a range of powerful military units and siege weapons. Improvements to Fortress units may be researched here. The Fortress also fires arrows at enemies, making it a defensive structure as well.



Granary

The Granary is a drop site for any type of food. Build Farms next to the Granary for efficient food gathering. Herd cattle and goats to the Granary for slaughter. Research improvements at the Granary for food gathering operations.



Military Academy

The Military Academy trains infantry units. Improvements to infantry units may be researched at the Military Academy.

The Greek freemen served in their military as an adjunct to their normal lives as farmers, traders, craftsmen, and sailors. Able-bodied men were taught weapon skills and battle movement regularly so as to be ready when needed. This training was part of the advanced education system of the Greeks, where non-slaves were taught a variety of skills at military academies.



Storehouse

The Storehouse is a Greek drop site for wood and gold. Build a Storehouse close to gold mines and forests for efficient resource gathering. Improvements to mining and wood collection are researched at the Storehouse.



Lumber Camp

The Lumber Camp is an Egyptian drop site for wood. Build it next to a forest for efficient logging. Research improvements to logging at the Lumber Camp.



Stable

The Stable trains cavalry and counter-cavalry units. Improvements to cavalry may be researched at the Stable.



Migdal Stronghold

The Migdal Stronghold trains Chariots, Camelry, and War Elephants. It also fires arrows at enemy units, and can be used to garrison units. Improvements to the Migdal Stronghold units can be researched here.



Mining Camp

The Mining Camp is an Egyptian drop site for gold. Build it next to a gold mine for efficient gold gathering. Research improvements to mining at the Mining Camp.



Barracks

Infantry and archer units are trained at Egyptian Barracks. Improvements to infantry and archers can be researched at the Barracks.

All world civilizations thus far have had the need to train soldiers—at least for defense, if not aggression against neighbors. For many, this training took place at a barracks, which served as both living quarters and a training ground. New recruits were assigned to the barracks, and after a training period they were ready for service. At the barracks they learned the mechanics of their weapons, the drill of battlefield movements, and the discipline required to obey orders in combat.



Granary

The Granary is a drop site for any type of food. Build Farms next to the Granary for efficient food gathering. Herd cattle and goats to the Granary for slaughter. Research improvements at the Granary for food gathering operations.



Monument

Monuments generate favor. Additional Monuments will increase the rate at which favor is generated. Up to five Monuments may be built.



Obelisk

The Obelisk is summoned by the Priests of Egypt and reveals a small area of the map. It is very useful in maintaining cheap line of sight over the map.



Siege Works

Build powerful siege weapons at the Siege Works and research improvements to siege weapons.



Lighthouse

A Lighthouse provides significant line of sight but has no attack. Place Lighthouses in key areas to maximize terrain that will be revealed.

Norse Buildings



Hill Fort

Norse Hill Forts train elite units and fire arrows. Research improvements to Hill Fort units.



Longhouse

The Norse Longhouse trains infantry and cavalry units. Improvements to these units may be researched here.



Ox Cart

The Ox Cart is a mobile drop site that can collect food, wood, and gold. The Ox Cart's mobility allows the Norse to gather resources swiftly and efficiently. However, the slow-moving Ox Carts count against population cap and are very vulnerable to attack.

The Norse Ox Cart in Age of Mythology is representative of the Norse hunting and gathering lifestyle that dominated their culture until agriculture and animal husbandry became predominant. The ancient Norse ranged far from their home bases for food and raw materials because their lands were not bountiful and their climate was harsh. Later, when they turned to raiding to increase their wealth, they tended to hit quickly, gather what was available, and move on.

Improvements

Throughout the ages you can improve your units by researching improvements. Improvements can affect unit hitpoints, armor, creation speed, or resource gathering speed. Buildings can also benefit from improvements.



Ambassadors

Researched at Market

Improvement Reduces the tribute penalty at the Market

Since the rise of the first great civilizations, ambassadors have been useful as communicators between rulers. Because communication was usually limited by the speed of a horse or ship, it was useful to have representatives present who could convey the policies of neighboring countries. An important function of ambassadors was to negotiate agreements regarding trade, peace, border disputes, loans, and tribute.



Architects

Researched at Town Center

Requires Masons

Improvement Increases hitpoints of all buildings



Ballista Tower

Researched at Guard Tower

Requires Guard Tower

Improvement Increases tower hitpoints and attack

An improvement in larger towers and fortifications was the addition of heavier weapons, such as ballistae. These heavier weapons made it possible to engage enemies at greater range and inflict more damage against siege engines and troop concentrations.



Boiling Oil

Researched at Sentry Tower

Improvement Allows Towers, Migdol Strongholds, Hill Forts, and Fortresses to attack units attacking their base

Enemies gathered at the base of a defensive wall could normally be attacked only if defenders leaned out from the wall or otherwise exposed themselves to arrow fire from below. One improvement for wall defenses was to provide boiling oil or other substances that could be poured on attackers below. Oil was particularly devastating if it could be set on fire first. This had the double effect of driving attackers away and burning their siege equipment.



Bow Saw

Researched at Storehouse, Ox Cart, Lumber Camp

Requires Hand Axe

Improvement Villagers gather wood faster and carry more

Following the discovery of bronze and iron metallurgy, the invention of the saw was a further technology breakthrough. Saws greatly reduced waste when felling trees and preparing wood for building, and simultaneously increased worker productivity in gathering.



Bronze

Researched at Armory, Dwarf Armory

Requires Copper Weapons, Copper Mail, and/or Copper Shields

Improvement Bronze weapons and armor are superior to copper

Bronze Weapons—Increases the attack of human units and buildings.

Bronze Mail—Improves the armor of human soldiers against hack attacks.

Bronze Shields—Improves the pierce armor of human soldiers.

Armory mail improvements affect the hack armor of all human soldiers, including heroes, Pharaohs, and Priests. This affects all units trained at the Academy, Barracks, Migdol Stronghold, Longhouse, Fortress, or Hill Fort. They do not affect myth units, siege weapons, or ships. Hack armor protects a unit against hack attacks, which are generally hand-to-hand attacks.



Burning Pitch

Researched at Armory

Improvement Archers, archer ships, and ballistae receive flaming missiles, increasing their attack against buildings



Carpenters

Researched at Storehouse, Ox Cart, Lumber Camp

Requires Bow Saw

Improvement Villagers gather wood faster and carry more

The dramatic increases in food surpluses following the invention of agriculture and the domestication of many animal species allowed specialist craftsmen to appear in advanced ancient societies. Carpenters, for example, excelled at building with wood. Societies benefited by this specialization because a few skilled carpenters were much more efficient than a like number of unskilled men attempting the same project.



Carrier Pigeons

Researched at Sentry Tower, Outpost

Requires Signal Fires

Improvement Increases the line of sight of all buildings

In addition to signal fires and other visual signals, the use of carrier pigeons was an improvement that allowed messages to be carried quickly for many miles across any type of terrain. Commanders at a central position could be kept informed of events on the front lines by regular bird posts.



Citadel Wall

Researched at Gate, Fortified Wall

Requires Fortified Wall

Improvement Increases wall hitpoints

A further improvement in walls was the erection of citadels at intervals along the wall, not just at corners. Citadels were points of extra strength, protecting both staircases down into the town and concentrations of defenders. Climbing attackers could be placed under fire from multiple citadels, as well as the wall face. If attackers got onto the wall, they could not get into the town without taking a citadel first.



Cladding

Researched at Dock

Improvement Increases the pierce armor of ships

Prior to the advent of gunpowder, ship-to-ship combat was conducted by missile fire (archery or heavier throwing weapons), ramming, or boarding. For protection against missile fire, ancient shipwrights improved their vessels with cladding—a wood or metal bulwark that protected sailors or rowers. Viking sailors mounted their shields along the side of their long boats for protection at sea.



Coinage

Researched at Market

Improvement Increases caravan speed

One of the great economic improvements of the ancient age was the development of money. Money first appeared in Greek Asia Minor as coins made of electrum. Money increased the efficiency of commerce by acting as a medium of exchange, storage of value, and a standard of value. Before money, all trade was barter based. Barter is inefficient due to the time needed to reach agreement on fair rates of exchange for diverse commodities.



Conscript

Researched at Archery Range, Barracks, Military Academy, Stable, Migdol Stronghold, Dock

Requires Levy

Improvement Increases unit creation speed

The last resort for a ruler needing soldiers was the forced enlistment of available able-bodied men into military service. This compulsory draft—or conscription—of manpower was disruptive and unpleasant, and a step not taken lightly. Unless conscripts were well-led and highly motivated, they usually performed poorly. But conscription did put soldiers into the field quickly, and this could make a difference in an emergency.



Copper

Researched at Armory, Dwarf Armory

Copper Weapons—Increases the attack of human units and buildings.

Copper Mail—Improves the armor of human soldiers against hack attacks.

Copper Shields—Improves the pierce armor of your soldiers.

Raw copper was the first metal utilized by man because it was occasionally found on the earth's surface. It had a relatively low melting point and could be worked and hammered into usable shapes. When humans discovered how to melt it and mold it, they were able to make the first cast metal objects. Most important of these were knives for work and war. Copper weapons were superior to stone weapons in almost every way, but especially in being less fragile.



Crenelations

Researched at Sentry Tower

Improvement Increases the attack of buildings against moving targets

Crenelations—the low sections of a castle battlement—allowed defenders to fire at attacking troops while remaining relatively protected from enemy ground fire.



Draft Horse

Researched at Fortress, Siege Works, Hill Fort

Improvement Increases the speed of siege weapons

Beasts of burden—such as horses, oxen, and mules—improved human productivity in any activity requiring carrying or pulling. A single man could drive a team of horses or oxen that could pull far more weight than the man could alone. This proved true in combat as well. Teams of horses could move siege equipment into place much faster than even very large teams of men.



Enclosed Deck

Researched at Dock

Improvement Increases cargo capacity of transport ships

The earliest boats were small and had no decks. Crew and cargo occupied the space created by the hull. As ship sizes grew they were improved with enclosed decks that created storage space within the hull. Cargo, living quarters, and supplies could be stored below decks, away from the elements and out of the crew's way. The crew operated the ship from the top deck, which remained open. Enclosed decks improved the carrying capacity and productivity of ships.



Engineers

Researched at Fortress, Siege Works, Hill Fort

Improvement Increases siege weapon attack

While some early engineers labored to make walls and other fortifications withstand attack, other engineers were working to find better ways to attack fortifications. Siege engineers learned to find weaknesses in enemy fortifications, improve the power and effect of siege weapons, and otherwise prepare the way for an eventual assault.



Flood Control

Researched at Granary, Ox Cart

Requires Irrigation

Improvement Villagers gather food from farms faster

The availability of water from river valleys was critical to the rise of many great early civilizations, but rivers also presented dangers. Flooding was a nearly annual event in Egypt, for example. The ancients improved their engineering and learned to control flooding, or minimize its destruction. By using levees to keep the river within its banks in some places and encouraging it to flood in others and thereby drop its rich silt onto fields, the river could be harnessed to benefit food production.



Guard Tower

Researched at Sentry Tower

Improvement Increases hitpoints and adds attack to towers

Improved towers or other fortifications might be placed at vital points such as river crossings or mountain passes where enemies were forced to traverse. The garrison of the guard tower was expected to fight and defend the fortification until help could arrive, as well as warn commanders of encroachments. Because such a fortification was usually placed at a vital position, an enemy could not afford to pass it by, leaving their retreat blocked.



Hand Axe

Researched at Storehouse, Ox Cart, Lumber Camp

Improvement Increases the speed of wood gathering and the amount of wood carried

The invention of stone and then metal axes was an important breakthrough because it expedited felling trees and gathering wood, a critical building and fuel resource. The metal axe was superior to stone. The metal axe could be resharpened while the stone one had to be continually replaced.



Hunting Dogs

Researched at Granary, Ox Cart

Improvement Gather food from hunted animals faster

Dogs are thought to have been the first animals domesticated by humans, perhaps 11,000 years ago. They were valuable hunting companions because they could flush out, attack, and retrieve game. With the help of dogs, humans became much more successful hunters. Dogs were also valuable as beasts of burden, guards against predators and enemies, and dependable companions.



Fortified Town Center

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Increases the hitpoints and attack of your Town Centers and increases the population they can support.



Fortified Wall

Researched at Gate, Stone Wall

Requires Stone Wall

Improvement Increases wall hitpoints

Town defenders improved the earliest simple walls by fortifying them. This involved strengthening in terms of thickness and construction techniques, and adding protected fighting positions for defenders. Shielded platforms at the top allowed defenders to shoot and fight off climbing attackers. Bastions at corners allowed defenders to bring interlocking fire onto enemies at a wall from three directions.



Husbandry

Researched at Granary, Ox Cart

Improvement Villagers carry more food

In conjunction with the development of farming and the domestication of animals, new techniques in husbandry (for example, for carrying, storing, and preserving food) were developed to take advantage of renewable food sources. Without improvements in husbandry, a high percentage of perishable foods would have become worthless. Important early advances in husbandry included basket weaving, pottery, salting of meat and fish, cheese making, smoking of meat and fish, and using animals for transport.



Levy

Researched at Archery Range, Barracks, Military Academy, Stable, Migdal Stronghold

Improvement Increases unit creation speed

Where a population had a large percentage of non-slaves, the government usually made provisions to mobilize the free men for military service. Citizens that were always available on standby in emergencies were called the levy. The ruler could call out the levy under certain conditions, but especially if enemies were approaching. The levy was a formal understanding and obligation, roughly equivalent to a tax or mandatory public service. For instance, Greek freemen, from early adulthood to their sixties, were expected to serve in their town's phalanx—a local variation of the levy.



Iron

Researched at Armory, Dwarf Armory

Requires Bronze Weapons, Bronze Mail, and/or Bronze Shields

Improvement Iron armor and weapons are the finest available in *Age of Mythology*

Iron Weapons—Increases the attack of human units and buildings.

Iron Mail—Improves the armor of human soldiers against hack attacks.

Iron Shields—Improves the pierce armor of your soldiers.



Masons

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Increases building hitpoints

The skill of masonry arose in diverse areas, such as those with good stone and access to mud for making bricks. In ancient Egypt the skill was prized for constructing grand monuments and buildings. In ancient Greece the skill was initially required for mountain citadels that protected agricultural valleys below. Later, Greek masons also constructed magnificent temples, domestic buildings, and defensive walls.



Irrigation

Researched at Granary, Ox Cart

Requires Plow

Improvement Villagers gather food from farms faster

Ancient gatherers and farmers understood the relationship between the sun, water, and crops. Enterprising cultures learned to control the availability of water by irrigation. Canals brought water often great distances to fertile lands otherwise too dry for agriculture. Irrigation was critical to food production, population growth, and economic power in many regions where human civilization first arose, including the Fertile Crescent, Egypt, and China.

Naval Oxybeles

Researched at Dock

Improvement Increases the range of siege ships

The oxybeles—or “bolt thrower”—was a Greek version of the ballista. Descriptions have survived of this weapon firing one or two long arrow-headed bolts. Hand winches at the rear of the weapon pulled back a large bow made of laminated wood and sinew. Mounted on a ship, these weapons would have a devastating effect on fortifications on shore.



Pickaxe

Researched at Storehouse, Ox Cart, Mining Camp

Improvement Gather gold faster and carry more

Humans first used metals in prehistoric times, collecting those metals that could be found nearly pure on the earth's surface, such as copper and electrum. When supplies of easily found metals were exhausted, ancient peoples learned to dig into the earth to find more. The digging tools were rudimentary sticks or bones. Adding stone and later metal heads to digging tools made them more useful and durable. The development of the pickaxe greatly improved the digging power of a man by allowing greater force to be applied at the point of impact.



Plow

Researched at Granary, Ox Cart

Improvement Villagers gather food from farms faster

Agricultural production was enhanced by the improvement of the plow, especially when the plow was harnessed to a strong pulling animal. Before the advent of the plow, farming was confined to soft ground that could be broken with digging sticks for the placement of seeds. The continually improving plow harnessed to an ox or horse could break dry, tough ground more efficiently than hand tools. This allowed more land to be farmed and increased farm worker productivity.



Purse Seine

Researched at Dock

Improvement Fishing ships gather fish faster

The purse seine was an improved fishing net that increased the productivity of fishermen. The purse seine used two ships working together to draw a deep wall net into a column around a school of fish. Closing the bottom of the net column created a great "purse" filled with fish. The column was then hauled on board one of the ships to retrieve the catch.



Quarry

Researched at Storehouse, Ox Cart, Mining Camp

Requires Shaft Mine

Improvement Villagers gather gold faster and carry more

Once the surface deposits of metal were gathered, early miners dug excavating pits—or quarries—following the deposits of metal into the earth. Quarries were labor intensive and often engaged large teams of slaves to do the back-breaking work. Quarries were most common when the ore seams were diffuse and near the surface.



Reinforced Ram

Researched at Dock

Improvement Increases ramming ship crush armor

The development of the oar-powered ram led to an effort to strengthen the hulls of ships to resist being crushed. Naval architects had to balance the desire for speed (which increased the effect of a ram attack) and the desire for hull strength (which increased ship survivability). At the great naval battle at Salamis, the smaller and swifter Greek ships gained a decisive advantage against the larger and stronger Persian and Phoenician ships in the narrow strait. In more open water, the much larger Persian fleet may have reversed the outcome.



Salt Amphora

Researched at Dock

Requires Purse Seine

Improvement Increases fishing ship food capacity

Although fishing ships could sail far out to sea, getting fresh fish back to port was a challenge. Mediterranean and Black Sea shipwrecks filled with Greek amphorae (storage pots) suggest that pickling fish in salt was quite common. The salt itself was sometimes mixed with fish to form a paste called garum that was popular among both Greeks and Romans.



Shaft Mine

Researched at Storehouse, Ox Cart, Mining Camp

Requires Pickaxe

Improvement Villagers gather gold faster and carry more

Early miners learned that metal came from ore and ore often resided in narrow seams or reefs within the earth. To follow narrow seams of ore into mountains underground required shaft mining. Rather than excavate a huge and largely worthless pit, the miner followed the seam with a narrow shaft, usually supported with timber to prevent cave-ins. Ancient shaft mines in Europe reached impressive depths. Perfectly preserved Celtic salt miners have been found in deep salt mines where they lost their lives thousands of years ago.



Tax Collectors

Researched at Market

Improvement Reduces the cost of buying/selling at the Market

Governments have always needed sources of revenue. These revenues commonly come from taxes on agricultural production and manufacturing, or duties on trade. Tax collectors were employed to gather the goods owed to the government. Efficient and trustworthy tax collectors helped keep tax rates low. Inefficient or corrupt tax collectors increased the tax burden, leading to civil unrest and injustice.



Signal Fires

Researched at Sentry Tower

Improvement Increases the line of sight of all buildings

Long before the advent of the telegraph and radio, the ancients developed methods for rapid communication over distance using fires, flags, and banners. Signal positions were placed within visual contact of each other in a chain, and simple messages could be rapidly transmitted across large distances. A defensive wall could be manned lightly while mobile reserves were kept concentrated at regular intervals. Signals could bring warnings quickly, allowing the central reserve to move to a threatened position.



Stone Wall

Researched at Gate, Wooden Wall

Improvement Increases wall armor and hitpoints

Humans have been fortifying their towns for defense since the first towns were built more than 10,000 years ago. Walls were built to keep out human enemies and protect winter food supplies. Wall materials depended on what was available; for instance, logs in northern forests or mud bricks in the Middle East. The preferred wall material was stone. It would not burn like wood and was much more difficult to break than bricks.

Mythological Improvements

Mythological improvements are usually unique to the gods worshipped. An exception to this is omniscience, which is available to all cultures. Omniscience enables you to see all enemy units and is researched at the Temple.

Egyptian



Adze of Wepwawet

Worship Bast

Researched at Lumber Camp

Improvement Laborers cut down trees and harvest wood faster

Wepwawet was a minor Egyptian god of the funerary cult. He used his adze (a precursor of the plane tool) to break open the mouth of the deceased in the “opening of the mouth” ceremony. Egyptians depicted him as a jackal, though later Greeks associated him with wolves, and named his sacred town of Zawty “Lycopolis.”



Atef Crown

Worship Osiris

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases mummy hitpoints and attack; increases the life span of their minions

Osiris was often depicted wearing this conical white crown topped by the solar disk and flanked by two red ostrich plumes. The white crown was the crown of Upper Egypt, the solar disk was a sun symbol of kingship and the red feathers were symbols of the two truths—life and death. The feather was also a symbol of Ma'at, the goddess of truth and justice.



Axe of Vengeance

Worship Horus

Researched at Barracks

Improvement Improves Axemen bonus damage against buildings

The Egyptians favored two different forms of axe, one that hacked and one that pierced. The hacking axe had a long cutting edge and was better wielded against unarmored foes; the piercing axe could punch through armor, helmets, and skulls alike, as the mummy of Sekenere Tao II, a 17th-Dynasty ruler of Thebes, reveals.



Bone Bow

Worship Sekhmet

Researched at Migdol Stronghold

Improvement Increases range of Chariot Archers

The bow and crossed arrows were a symbol of a goddess considered old even by the ancient Egyptians, Neith. She was a goddess of war, hunting, protection, and creation. She was often depicted holding a bow and arrows, or crowned by a star over which a bow curved. Bows could be constructed of very simple materials (wood and sinew) or more complex, sturdier materials (horn, soft and hard woods, and sinew). Arrowheads were made out of stone, bone, and metals.



Book of Thoth

Worship Thoth

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Improves new Town Center cost and attack

"The Book of Thoth lies beneath the middle of the river, near Coptos, in an iron box. In the iron box is a box of bronze; in the bronze box is a sycamore box; in the sycamore box is an ivory and ebony box; in the ivory and ebony box is a silver box; in the silver box is a golden box—and in that lies the Book of Thoth. All around the iron box are twisted snakes and scorpions, and it is guarded by a serpent who cannot be slain."

—From the tale of Setna Khaemwese and the Book of Thoth



Crocodopolis

Worship Hathor

Researched at Temple

Improvement Improves Petsuchos range

The crocodile god, known as Suchos or Sobek, was said to aid fertility. The Greeks named his oasis of Fayoum near Lake Qarun "Crocodopolis" or "city of the crocodile," where a sacred crocodile was kept in its own private lake.



Desert Wind

Worship Osiris

Researched at Migdol Stronghold

Improvement Improves speed and attack of Camelry

Dromedaries (one-humped camels) are remarkably adapted to life in the harsh desert environment. They can go for days without water, lose almost half of their body weight without adverse effects, and carry hundreds of pounds. Their flat feet and pacing gait allow them to move at a good, rocking clip across the desert sands.



Electrum Bullets

Worship Ptah

Researched at Armory

Improvement Increases Slinger attack

Electrum is a naturally occurring alloy of gold and silver. Though weaker than other metals available at the time, the mystical, spiritual, and psychological properties of the metal were more important than its strength. The great pharaoh Ramses rode into combat on his chariot wearing a helmet of electrum.



City of the Dead

Worship Nephthys

Researched at Temple, Town Center

Improvement Improves Pharaoh attack and resurrection time

"The Osiris Ani, whose word is truth, saith I am the serpent Sata whose years are infinite. I lie down dead. I am born daily. I am the serpent Sa-en-ta, the dweller in the uttermost parts of the earth. I lie down in death. I am born, I become new, I renew my youth every day."

—The Papyrus of Ani



Criosphinx

Worship Bast

Researched at Temple

Improvement Improves Sphinx hitpoints and attack

The ram-headed Criosphinx was a guardian of sacred Egyptian sites. The Temple at Karnak was once connected to Luxor and the Nile by the Avenue of the Sphinx—a road flanked by dozens upon dozens of the implacable riddle keepers.

"And yet the riddle was not to be solved by guess-work but required the prophet's art; wherein thou wast found lacking; neither birds nor sign from heaven helped thee, but I came, the simple Oedipus; I stopped her mouth by mother wit, untaught of auguries."

—Oedipus, Oedipus Rex



Feet of the Jackal

Worship Anubis

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases Anubite hitpoints and jump distance

After his murder at the hands of Set, Osiris usurped Anubis's position as chief god of the dead. Anubis thereafter took on varied duties related to caring for the Ka, or souls, of the dead in the afterlife—one of which was the swift transport of souls to the Hall of Ma'at, the Hall of Judgment, where he was responsible for weighing the hearts of the dead.



Funeral Barge

Worship Osiris

Researched at Dock

Improvement Increases Kebenit attack against archer ships

Each morning Ra, the sun god, was reborn and rode across the sky on the Manjet-Barge—the “Barge of a Million Years.” At sunset when Ra died and became Auf, the barge turned into the Mesketet-Barge—the “Night Barge”—and carried him through the hours of darkness until his rebirth.



Feral

Worship Set

Researched at Granary

Improvement Converted animals do more damage and provide more food

Set is associated with several animals; some are pigs, hippos, crocodiles, scorpions, and donkeys. His long-eared, droop-nosed visage was probably an aggregate of many of these animals rather than any one of them. He is also depicted as a male hippopotamus, considered by the Egyptians to be a destructive, dangerous creature.



Flood of the Nile

Worship Isis

Researched at Granary

Improvement Provides a steady flow of free food

The Black Land, another name for Lower Egypt, refers to the deposits of soil that the regular flooding of the Nile left behind. This rich, black soil was excellent for farming, and coupled with irrigation and inventions like the shaduf, allowed ancient Egyptians to survive and prosper in an otherwise harsh environment. The Egyptians' whole way of life depended upon these floods. The Nile today doesn't flood as it used to, a series of dams and hydro-electric plants, like the one at Aswan, control its flooding and generate electrical energy.



Funeral Rites

Worship Nephthys

Researched at Temple, Town Center

Improvement Increases Priest and Pharaoh damage to myth units

Nephthys saith unto the Osiris Ani, whose word is truth I go round about thee to protect thee, O brother Osiris. I have come to be a protector unto thee. My strength shall be near thee, my strength shall be near thee, forever. Ra hath heard thy cry, and the gods have made thy word to be truth. Thou art raised up. Thy word is truth in respect of what hath been done unto thee. Ptah hath overthrown thy foes, and thou art Horus, the son of Hathor.”

—The Papyrus of Ani

Greatest of Fifty

Worship Horus

Researched at Barracks

Improvement Increases Spearmen pierce armor and bonus damage to archers

The invasion of the Hyksos at the end of the 14th Dynasty spurred the peaceful Egyptians to organize what had, to that point, been a rather informal army. The pharaoh often led his armies into battle; the chain of command ran from the pharaoh, to princes, to other nobles and officers down to the “Greatest of Fifty.” The Greatest of Fifty commanded fifty soldiers, one of four such groups under the command of a Standard Bearer. Soldiers under a Standard Bearer all carried the same arms and armament.



Hieracosphinx

Worship Bast

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases Criosphinx hitpoints and attack

Instead of a human head, the Hieracosphinx has the fierce head of a hawk, a nasty disposition, and a razor-sharp beak—all the better to eviscerate those who cannot answer its riddles. It is a much more aggressive and pitiless sphinx than its more peaceable cousins the Criosphinx and Androsphinx.

“Say, sirrah, hast thou ever proved thyself a prophet? When the riddling Sphinx was here why hadst thou no deliverance for this folk?”

—Oedipus, Oedipus Rex



Necropolis

Worship Anubis

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases favor generation rate

The ancient city of Syut was a center of worship for Anubis and Wapwawet. Syut was later renamed Lycopolis—City of the Wolf—by the Greeks for its importance to the two “wolf”-headed gods. Today the city of Asyut is an important agricultural center for cotton and grains, but the tombs of its ancient necropolis tell of its significance as a center of Anubis—god of the dead and guardian of the necropoli.



New Kingdom

Worship Osiris

Researched at Temple

Improvement Splits the kingdom between two Pharaohs

Lower Egypt (the fertile Black Lands) and Upper Egypt (the arid Red Lands) were united when the ruler of Upper Egypt, King Menes, conquered Lower Egypt, founding the 1st Dynasty around 3100 B.C.

“The living Heru; Who prospers the Two Lands; the Two Ladies: Who prospers the Two Lands; the Golden Heru: Who prospers the Two Lands; King of Upper and Lower Chem: Neferkare; the Son of Re Shal[baka], beloved of Ptah-South-of-His-Wall, who lives like Re forever.”

—From the Shabaka Stone



Ram of the West Wind

Worship Sekhmet

Researched at Siege Works

Improvement Increases Siege Tower hitpoints and attack

Rams were the first of ancient siege weapons; they were rolled up against the walls. Repeated strikes of metal-tipped rams would eventually crush and crumble the mud brick ramparts. As walls evolved, rams developed larger shelters and taller siege towers.



Leather Frame Shield

Worship Ptah

Researched at Armory

Improvement Increases Spearmen pierce armor

The Egyptians favored a round-topped, leather-covered wooden shield. Leather over a wooden frame offered a cheap, light, and easy to work covering that was in many cases more resilient than heavy and expensive metal coverings. A lighter shield meant that troops carrying them could move more quickly and wield them more effectively.



Medjay

Worship Hathor

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Increases Mercenary life span

For the Medjay, Nubian nomads, long service alongside the military forces of Egypt became service as a police force in parts of Thebes. Around 200 B.C. they protected the construction of the royal necropolis at Deir el-Medina. There they ensured that the workers worked and were kept safe—and they even pitched in to help in the construction itself. Eventually the Medjay people and their culture were totally absorbed by Egypt.



Sacred Cats

Worship Bast

Researched at Granary

Improvement Protects farms from vermin; farms produce food faster

Bubastis was the center for worship of Bast, the cat-headed Egyptian goddess of fertility. Initially, her worship included the cats that inhabited her temples, but eventually extended to all cats. Cat worship was pragmatic for the Egyptians, for the cats protected their grain stores and homes from vermin and venomous creatures. Killing a cat was considered murder; a Roman living in Alexandria discovered this when he accidentally killed a cat and was subsequently pulled from his home into the street and lynched by an angry mob of Egyptians.



Scalloped Axe

Worship Ptah

Researched at Armory

Improvement Increases Axemen attack

The Egyptians were fond of the axe as a weapon and tool. Heavily ornamented axes have been discovered with the burial goods of important mummies. Scalloping added surface area to the head of an axe, making it stronger and able to deal more damage.



Serpent Spear

Worship Anubis

Researched at Barracks

Improvement Increases Spearmen attack

Viper, asp, and cobra—serpents were venerated by ancient Egyptians because they killed vermin around grain stores and were feared for the venom in their swift and frequently deadly bites.



Shaduf

Worship Ptah

Researched at Temple

Improvement Decreases cost and build speed of farms

The shaduf was a simple but important invention consisting of a container made of animal skins or clay attached to a lever counterbalanced by stones. The container was used to lift water from the Nile River and dumped into canals for irrigation.



Skin of the Rhino

Worship Ra

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Improves Villagers' hack and pierce armor

Rhinos are noted for their tough, thick hide. The skin even appears to be in armor-like plates. Add to that a large horn (or horns) on its nose and the rhinoceros is a fierce-looking creature indeed. Isis protects your laborers by toughening their skin, making them less vulnerable to the attacks of wild animals and enemies.



Slings of the Sun

Worship Sekhmet

Researched at Armory, Barracks

Improvement Increases Slinger damage against infantry

Ancient hunters used slings to kill or stun small prey, and while sling stones had the capacity to maim or kill, soldiers often used them simply to distract or harass enemies. Because archers relied on their range and aim, slingers could be very effective against them. Slingers didn't have to approach archers on foot, a deadly prospect, and the stones they hurled into a formation of archers wounded many, killed others, and certainly broke their concentration and threw off their aim.



Spear on the Horizon

Worship Horus

Researched at Armory, Barracks

Improvement Increases Spearmen attack and hitpoints

Horus set out to vanquish Set. He stood at the prow of a barge, protected by the spells of Isis. He had a chained spear fashioned for the hunt and Thoth laid great spells upon Horus's splendid weapon. The spear flashed and glittered. Set, in the form of a great red hippopotamus, attacked the barge of Horus, but the spells of Isis held and the barge was untouched. With a mighty heave Horus cast the shining spear into the neck of the hippopotamus and Set, murderer of Osiris and enemy of Ra, was destroyed.



Sun-Dried Mud Brick

Worship Hathor

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Decreases building costs and increases hitpoints

Plentiful, easy to work, strong, and an excellent barrier to heat, sun-dried mud brick was one of the most common construction materials in ancient Egypt. Straw and other debris added to the bricks gave them better tensile strength. Plaster, woven straw coverings, and stone foundations often protected mud brick walls from the elements. Stone was used preferentially for monuments and tombs because it would better survive the elements without such protections, lending a material immortality to the intended spiritual immortality of the nobles and notables buried therein.



Spirit of Ma'at

Worship Nephthys

Researched at Temple, Town Center

Improvement Increases Priest healing rate and decreases creation cost

"... I have seen the Hidden One who is therein. I was hidden, but I found the boundary. I journeyed to Nerutef, and he who was therein covered me with a garment. I have myrrh of women, together with the shenu powder of living folk. Verily he (Osiris) told me the things that concerned himself. I said: Let thy weighing of me be even as we desire."

—The Papyrus of Ani



Tusks of Apedemak

Worship Thoth

Researched at Migdol Stronghold

Improvement Increases War Elephant hitpoints and attack

Lion-headed Apedemak was a Nubian god of war and victory. He was often depicted standing on the backs of elephants. Elephants and cattle were revered at Apedemak's center of worship, Musawwarat es-Sufra, to the north of the Sixth Cataract, where elephants had military and religious significance.



Valley of the Kings

Worship Thoth

Researched at Migdol Stronghold

Improvement Increases creation speed of Migdol Strongholds units

Centuries of pharaohs were buried in the famous Valley of Kings, including the mighty general Thutmose III, the last of the great pharaohs Ramses III, and of course, the child pharaoh Tutankamen. The inhabitants of Deir el-Medina constructed many of the tombs in the valley. Skilled tomb builders sometimes lived in isolated communities so that the secrets of the tombs they built could be kept safe.



Stones of Red Linen

Worship Sekhmet

Researched at Dock, Siege Works

Improvement Increases catapult and war barge damage against buildings

Sekhmet is the "Lady of Red Linen"—red linen, the garments of her fallen, bloodied enemies. Her rage was so terrible that when Ra set her loose upon the world, the only way he could keep her from destroying all of humankind was to dye a lake of beer blood red so that she, thinking it was the blood of her victims, would drink it and pass out. Sekhmet's wrath allows catapults and war barges to demolish buildings.

Greek



Aegis Shield

Worship Athena

Researched at Armory

Improvement Increases infantry pierce armor

The Aegis was a magical shield that belonged to Zeus, but he usually allowed his favorite child, Athena, to carry it. The shield was fringed and covered with scales and often adorned with a Medusa head. It may have been the shield Perseus used to reflect the Medusa, thereby avoiding her gaze. Some myths depict the Aegis as a cloak, or a shield that could convert to a cloak. Like much of the armament of the Olympians, it was forged by Hephaestus.



Anastrophe

Worship Dionysus

Researched at Dock

Improvement Increases attack movement and training speed of Pentekonters

The anastrophe was a surprise maneuver used by Trireme captains to suddenly change directions and attempt to ram.



Athenian Wall

Worship Hera

Researched at Wall

Improvement Increases the hitpoints of Greek walls and towers

The Long Walls of Athens are attributed to the architect Callicrates. The Long Walls stretched from Athens itself to the harbor at Piraeus, a distance of more than 7 miles. They were formed of large blocks of stone stacked over 60 feet high and 12 feet thick. In the absence of powerful siege artillery, Athens was virtually impregnable except by the sea, which was defended by the famous Athenian navy.



Bacchanalia

Worship Dionysus

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Increases the hitpoints of all units

As god of wine, Dionysus's festivals with his followers were full of joy and celebration. However, there was a darker side to these events as well. Dionysus was also representative of untamed natural forces, and in a drunken, wild state, Dionysus's followers would be driven to bloody deeds and kill with their bare hands.



Deimos's Sword of Dread

Worship Ares

Researched at Military Academy

Improvement Increases Hypaspist attack

Deimos, also called Fear, was one of the sons of Ares and Aphrodite. He followed Ares in battle, along with his brother, Phobos. Deimos is a personification of emotion and does not appear as an actual character in any Greek myths.



Divine Blood

Worship Aphrodite

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Increases Villagers movement and build speed

Aphrodite's name means "foam-born," and according to some mythology, she rose from the sea near Cyprus after Uranus the Titan's severed body parts were hurled into the ocean by Kronos. As the goddess of beauty and passion, Aphrodite engaged in many trysts with mortals. Prominent among these was Aeneas, who would escape the burning city of Troy to eventually found Rome.



Enyo's Bow of Horror

Worship Ares

Researched at Archery Range

Improvement Increases Toxotes attack

Enyo, the personification of strife and discord, was also known as Eris, and was the daughter of Ares. She delighted in bloody battle-fields and was known as the Sacker of Cities, and appeared in Troy when the city fell to the Greeks. In some myths, Enyo produced the Golden Apple that began the Trojan War.



Face of the Gorgon

Worship Hera

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases Medusa hitpoints and attack

While Medusa is the most famous of the Gorgons, there were actually many of them, though only three are named in Greek mythology: Medusa, Euryale, and Steno. Only Medusa was mortal. The Gorgons were monstrous creatures covered with scales, hair of living serpents, hands of brass, and sharp fangs. It is not always clear if it was seeing the horrid visage of a Gorgon or meeting their gaze that could turn the viewer to stone. The Gorgons lived far to the west where they guarded an entrance to the underworld.



Flames of Typhon

Worship Artemis

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases Chimera hitpoints and attack

Typhon was a fire-breathing monster that dripped venom from his eyes. The battle between the gods and Typhon was so destructive that most of life on earth was killed. In the end, Typhon hurled Mount Aetna at Zeus, but Zeus struck it with a hundred well-aimed thunderbolts and pinned Typhon beneath the rubble. The monster was never entirely killed, though, which is why Mount Aetna still rumbles with earthquakes and lava. Typhon had many offspring with the equally monstrous Echidna, including the Chimera.



Forge of Olympus

Worship Hephaestus

Researched at Armory

Improvement Reduces cost of Armory improvements

As the smith of the Greek gods, Hephaestus forged many great items, such as the thunderbolts of Zeus, the Aegis Shield, the arrows of Eros, the chariot of Helios, and the armor of Achilles. He even helped to create the first woman, Pandora, of clay. Hephaestus also created items used against the gods when he was wronged, such as a throne that held Hera prisoner when she cast him out of Olympus for being so ugly, or a chain-link net used to trap his wife, Aphrodite, when he suspected her of cheating on him with Ares.



Golden Apples

Worship Aphrodite

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Increases favor generation rate

Enyo, or Strife, the daughter of Ares, decided to sow discord by producing a golden apple inscribed "to the fairest." The goddesses Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite immediately began squabbling over for which one of them the apple was intended. A shepherd named Paris was chosen to answer the question. Athena offered him wisdom. Hera offered him power. Aphrodite offered him the most beautiful woman in the world. Paris chose Aphrodite. The most beautiful woman in the world turned out to be Helen, wife of a prominent Greek king, and her abduction began the Trojan War.



Hand of Talos

Worship Hephaestus

Researched at Temple

Improvement Improves Colossi to Silver Colossi with greater hitpoints and attack

One of Zeus's many lovers was a mortal woman named Europa. In the form of a white bull, Zeus spirited her away to the Isle of Crete, where she had three sons. Zeus had Hephaestus forge a giant of iron to defend Europa and the island. Talos was powered by a single blood vein that ran from his throat to his ankle. The vein was sealed with a pin at the ankle.



Labyrinth of Minos

Worship Apollo

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases Minotaur attack and armor

Minos, the Minoan king of Crete, imprisoned the minotaur in a complex labyrinth designed by Daedalus, the famous Athenian inventor. The labyrinth was so skillfully designed that none could escape before they were devoured by the minotaur. Theseus, aided by Minos's daughter Ariadne, was able to escape the labyrinth by unravelling thread to mark his route. Minos was so enraged that he imprisoned Daedalus in the labyrinth, but Daedalus escaped by fashioning bird wings of wax. Upon his death, Minos was made one of the judges of Hades.

The Minoan palace at Knossos had an elaborate floor plan and may have led to the myth of the labyrinth.



Monstrous Rage

Worship Hera

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases all myth unit hack, pierce, and crush attack

Hera's implacable fury was well-known, especially against the various extramarital lovers of Zeus and their children. She placed serpents in the cradle of Heracles, sent a hundred-eyed giant to watch over Io, and tried to prevent the births of Athena and Artemis. As punishment for the madness she imbued upon Heracles that caused him to kill his parents, Zeus chained Hera to Olympus with anvils tied around her ankles.



Olympic Parent

Worship Zeus

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Increases heroes hitpoints

Many Greek heroes were half-mortals children of the Olympians, the Greek gods. Zeus was the most notorious philanderer in the Greek pantheon and sired many of the gods themselves as well as some of the most famous heroes of Greek mythology: Heracles, Perseus, and the twin Argonauts—Castor and Pollux. These heroes accomplished amazing tasks because of their divine heritage, but often faced divine wrath when the gods fought amongst themselves, as they often did, striking out at the children of their enemies.



Oracle

Worship Apollo

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases line of site for all units and buildings

One of the reasons Apollo was prominent in Greek mythology was because of his Oracle at Delphi, which could predict the future. Apollo established the oracle when he rid Delphi of the serpent, Python. Apollo dedicated a bronze tripod to the sanctuary there, and bestowed divine powers on one of the priestesses. The priestess, known as the Pythia, would chew on laurel leaves and inhale the hallucinating vapors issuing from the temple floor while mumbling prophecies that had to be translated by attendant male priests.



Phobos Spear of Panic

Worship Ares

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases Hoplite attack

Phobos, or Terror, was one of the sons of Ares and Aphrodite. He accompanied his father into battle. Phobos is more of an abstraction than an actual god, and does not appear in any Greek myths.

"In the centre was Phobos (Fear) worked in adamant, unspeakable, staring backwards with eyes that glowed with fire. His mouth was full of teeth in a white row, fearful and daunting, and upon his grim brow hovered frightful Eris (Strife) who arrays the throng of men ..."

—Hesiod, *Shield of Heracles*



Shafts of Plague

Worship Artemis

Researched at Armory

Improvement Increases archer attack

Like her brother, Apollo, Artemis was said to be able to cause a plague by firing her arrows. The family of Niobe met with such a death. Niobe made the foolish claim that she was superior to the mother of Apollo and Artemis, Leto, for she had borne seven sons and seven daughters, and Leto only two. Apollo then shot all seven sons and Artemis all seven daughters.



Shoulder of Talos

Worship Hephaestus

Researched at Temple

Improvement Improves Silver Colossi to Gold Colossi with greater hitpoints and attack

On the return voyage of Jason and the Argonauts, they needed to stop and resupply on the Isle of Crete, but the sorcerous Medea warned them of Talos. When Talos appeared and began to throw rocks at the Argo, Medea played her lyre to coax him to sleep. She then pulled out the bronze pin that held in his blood and the giant collapsed. Jason and his men could then collect food and water before continuing their voyage.



Spirited Charge

Worship Hermes

Researched at Stable

Improvement Increases cavalry speed and attack

Hermes was known for his speed and athleticism, and was said to have invented the race as a competitive sport. Statues of Hermes were positioned in gymnasiums and stadiums throughout Greece.

Greek cavalry could not truly charge as their saddles did not have stirrups, which allowed later medieval cavalry to brace the impact of a lance against the weight of their mount.



Roar of Orthus

Worship Aphrodite

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases the armor of Nemean Lions

Echidna was a half-woman, half-snake mother of many monstrous progeny, including Ladon (a dragon), the Hydra, the Chimera, Orthus (a multiheaded dog), and Cerberus (the multiheaded dog that guards the gates to Erebus). Echidna and Orthus had their own foul brood, including the Greek Sphinx and Nemean Lion. Orthus was guarding the cattle of Geryon when he was strangled by Heracles.



Sarissa

Worship Athena

Researched at Military Academy

Improvement Increases Hoplite hack armor

Although often referred to as the goddess of wisdom, Athena's realm more accurately extended to technology, and the development of the sarissa qualifies as one of the greatest achievements in military technology. While Greek infantry used 8–10-foot-long spears for centuries, Alexander the Great refined its use for the Greek phalanx, creating a 16–20-foot-long, two-handed pike called a sarissa. Macedonian phalanxes armed with sarissas dominated Mediterranean warfare until the rise of Rome.



Sun Ray

Worship Apollo

Researched at Armory

Improvement Increases the attack of Archers, Peltasts, Manticores, and Centaurs

Apollo was known as "Phoebus"—the "radiant"—and had a close connection to Helios, the sun god. Apollo is often shown holding a bow and arrow symbolizing the sun's rays as he was the god of archery (as art, not for warfare or hunting).



Sylvan Lore

Worship Hermes

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases Centaurs hitpoints and attack

Although Hermes was associated more with music and travel than with Sylvan environment, he was the father of Pan (with Dryope), who was the Greek god of wooded areas and fields. Pan's mother fled at the sight of him, but Hermes took Pan up to Olympus, where he entertained the gods as a jester.



Temple of Healing

Worship Apollo

Researched at Temple

Improvement Temples heal nearby allied units

Apollo was the father of Asclepius, the god of medicine, whose symbol, the caduceus, is still used as a symbol for medicine today (though it's often portrayed as the winged staff of Hermes, not the serpent-entwined staff of Asclepius).

"I begin to sing of Asclepius, son of Apollo and healer of sicknesses. In the Dotian plain fair Koronis, daughter of King Phlegyas, bare him, a great joy to men, a soother of cruel pangs. And so hail to you, lord; in my song I make my prayer to thee!"

—Homeric Hymn XVI



Thracian Horses

Worship Dionysus

Researched at Stables

Improvement Increases cavalry hitpoints

When Dionysus was young and wandered earth as a mortal, his growing cult was opposed by King Lycurgus of Thrace. Dionysus drove Lycurgus mad, so that he chopped up his own son with an axe, believing he was pruning a vine. Eventually his own subjects caused Lycurgus to be torn to pieces by wild horses.



Trirerach

Worship Artemis

Researched at Dock

Improvement Increases Trireme resistance to siege ships

The Trierarch was the highest ranking officer on a Trireme, and also responsible for the cost and maintenance of his ship. He was assisted by the Pentekontrarchos, or pilot, and the Auletes, who played a flute to keep the rowers in rhythm.



Vault of Erebus

Worship Hades

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Provides a constant but slow income of gold

Although Hades was the god of the dead, he was also considered the god of wealth because precious minerals came from beneath the ground. Hades's realm was divided into two parts, Erebus, where the dead first entered the underworld, and the deeper region of Tartarus, where the Titans were imprisoned. The underworld was divided from the world of living by 5 rivers: Acheron, the river of woe; Lethe, the river of forgetfulness; Styx, the river of unbreakable oaths; Phlegethon, the river of fire; and Cocytus, the river of lamentations.



Weapon of the Titans

Worship Hephaestus

Researched at Armory

Improvement Increases attack of Hetairoi, Myrmidon, and Gastraphetes

The Titans created and ruled the earth before their children, the Olympians, overthrew them. They wielded the raw power of the elements: Light, Earth, Time, Water, and Fire. The Olympians wielded fantastic, if more conventional, weapons forged by the club-footed god Hephaestus.



Winged Messenger

Worship Hermes

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases Pegasus line of sight and reduces build cost

Hermes was the messenger of the gods, a job made easier by the winged sandals that Hermes wore. He lent the sandals to Perseus when the hero fought the sea monster that threatened Andromeda.



Will of Kronos

Worship Ares

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases Cyclopes attack and armor

Greek mythology makes a distinction between the “lesser” cyclopes, who were the sons of Poseidon, and the “elder” cyclopes, who were children of Kronos. Their names were given as Argos, Brontes, Steropes, Euryalus, Elatreus, Trakhios, and Halimedes. The elder cyclopes were known as craftsmen and builders, and were so feared for their great strength that they were kept locked in Tartarus.

“After ten years of fighting, Ge prophesied a victory for Zeus if he were to secure the prisoners down in Tartarus as his allies. He thereupon slew their jailkeeper Kampe, and freed them from their bonds. In return the Cyclopes gave Zeus thunder, lightning, and a thunderbolt, as well as a helmet for Hades and a trident for Poseidon. Armed with these, the three gods overpowered the Titans, confined them in Tartarus, and put the Hekatonkheires in charge of guarding them.”

—Apollodorus

Norse



Arctic Gale

Worship Baldr

Researched at Dock

Improvement Increases Dragon Boat speed and resistance to hammer ships

When Baldr, the most beloved of the Aesir, died, he was placed on his fine boat Hringhorni. It was set alight and pushed out to sea by the giantess Hyrrokin.

"Who ride yonder,
on Raevil's horses,
the towering billows,
the roaring main
the sail-steeds are
with sweat bedewed,
the wave-courser will not
the wind withstand."

— *The Poetic Eddas, The Second Lay of Sigurd Fafnicide*



Arctic Wind

Worship Heimdall

Researched at Dock

Improvement Increases speed and hitpoints of Longboats

Viking sailors routinely crossed the North Atlantic from Scandinavia and Britain to Iceland with only simple navigation tools, no compass, and the presence of heavy storms. The 700 nautical miles could be crossed in as little as four days and nights with a steady wind.



Aurora Borealis

Worship Freyja

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases Valkyrie healing rate and hitpoints

The aurora borealis, or "northern lights," consist of flickering bands of color that can be seen in clear skies at high latitudes. The Norse believed that the lights were caused by the glittering armor of the Valkyries as they rode across the night sky.



Berserker gang

Worship Tyr

Researched at Longhouse

Improvement Increases the attack and hitpoints of Ulfsark

There is disagreement about whether the term "berserk" referred to "bare shirt" or wearing the skin of a bear into battle in the same way the Ulfsarks wore wolf skins. These warriors would enter a rage in combat where it is said their skin could turn away weapons.



Bravery

Worship Tyr

Researched at Longhouse

Improvement Increases Huskarl damage against buildings

The first recorded Viking raid was an A.D. 793 surprise attack against the monastery Lindisfarne, England. The raiders looted the monastery, killed any monks who resisted, then loaded their ships and returned home to Scandinavia. Within 100 years they were sailing to the Mediterranean to attack Italy and sailing down the Volga to raid the Black Sea.



Call of Valhalla

Worship Bragi

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases Ulfsark hitpoints

Valhalla—the “hall of the slain”—was Odin’s banquet hall in Gladshiem. The rafters were made of giant spears and the roof was shingled with shields. The massive hall had 540 doors, each of which allowed several hundred warriors to enter shoulder to shoulder. At the head of the hall was Hlidskalf, Odin’s throne, where he heard the whispers of his ravens and fed his dinner to his wolves.



Dwarven Auger

Worship Baldr

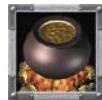
Researched at Hill Fort

Improvement Improves Portable Rams to Dwarven Augers which are faster, have more hitpoints, and greater attack

The dwarfs were great craftsmen and created many wondrous things in their deep cave forges. Some of their creations were for the Aesir, including Frey's boat, Skidbladnir, Gullinbursti, the golden boar, Odin's armband, and Mjolnir, Thor's famous hammer.

“Time ‘tis of the dwarfs
in Dvalin’s band,
to the sons of men,
to Lofar up to reckon,
those who came forth
from the world’s rock,
earth’s foundation,
to Iora’s plains.”

— *The Poetic Eddas, The Vala’s Prophecy*



Elhrimnir Kettle

Worship Heimdall

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases Einherjar attack

The kettle used by the cook Andhrimnit (“Sooty face”) to cook the boar Saehrimnir, which was used to feed the hungry Einherjar in Valhalla every night. Odin himself abstained from eating.

“For meat, they all feast on the boar Saehrimnir for, although the boar is boiled every morning, he becomes whole again every night.”

— *Gylfaginning* 39



Eyes in the Forest

Worship Loki

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Increases Ulfsark line of sight

Loki was a mischievous prankster and spy amongst the Aesir. He took many forms to hide or trick others, mortal and immortal alike. No one was safe from his prying eyes and dangerous wit.

“Harm seldom befalls the wary;
With his ears listens,
And with his eyes observes
So explores every prudent man.”

— *The Poetic Eddas, The High One’s Lay*



Granite Blood

Worship Hel

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases the hitpoints of giants

Ymir was the first Frost Giant. Odin, Vili, and Ve killed him and created the world with his body. He is somewhat akin the Titans of Greek mythology in his violent cruelty and his overthrow by younger gods.

*"From Ymir's flesh
the earth was formed,
and from his bones the hills,
the heaven from the skull
of that ice-cold giant,
and from his blood the sea."*

— *The Poetic Eddas, The Lay of Vafthrudnir*



Hamarrtroll

Worship Forseti

Researched at Temple

Improvement Improves Trolls to Hamarrtrolls, increasing hitpoints, armor, and attack

Fearsome night-stalking creatures, trolls inhabited the Ironwood—a forest filled with witches and werewolves. Sometimes multiheaded giants, sometimes goblins, they are most often portrayed as nasty, destructive creatures. The touch of sunlight turns a troll into stone so they tend keep to their caverns and caves during the day. Other myths show them as mysterious lore-keepers who will share their lore ... for a price.



Huntress's Axe

Worship Skadi

Researched at Longhouse

Improvement Increases Throwing Axemen attack

Skadi was so fierce a warrior, as were many of the Jötun, that the Aesir thought it better to turn aside her rage with gifts than face her in battle.

*"Then came a maid from heaven,
helmed, from above—
the clash of arms increased—
for the king's protection."*

— *The Poetic Eddas, The First Lay of Helgi Hundingcide*



Hall of Thanes

Worship Forseti

Researched at Longhouse

Improvement Increases speed and hitpoints of Hersirs

The hall was a center of social interaction for the Norse, especially Norse rulers. They gathered there, held court, ate, told stories, and drank beer. It was a display of a king's, or thane's, wealth if he had a splendidly decorated hall.

*"I was nurtured
in the kingly hall,
I was the joy of many
in the council of men.
Life I enjoyed,
and my father's wealth,
five winters only,
while my father lived."*

— *The Poetic Eddas, Oddrun's Lament*



Lone Wanderer

Worship Odin

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases speed of Ulfsarks

It was Odin's custom to go in disguise amongst giants and men. He went by many names in his wanderings: Vegtam, "the Wayfarer"; Ygg, "the Terrible"; Vafhudr, "Wind"; and Blindi, "the Blind" (to name just a few).

*"He alone knows
who wanders wide,
and has much experienced,
by what disposition
each man is ruled,
who common sense possesses."*

— *The Poetic Eddas, The High One's Lay*



Mithril Breastplate

Worship Forseti

Researched at Dwarf Armory

Improvement Increases the hack armor of Ulfsarks

Easy to work and harder than steel, a mithril breastplate was a treasure indeed. Conventional weapons could not pierce the untarnished, silvery metal.

*"Shields ye there can choose,
and smooth-shaven spears,
gold-red helms,
and of Huns a multitude,
silver-gilt saddle-cloths,
sarks gory-red,
the dart's obstruction,
and bit-gripping steeds."*

— *The Poetic Eddas, The Lay of Atli*



Long Serpent

Worship Njord

Researched at Dock

Improvement Increases Longboat attack and resistance to siege ships

"The ship was a dragon ... but this ship was far larger, and more carefully put together in all her parts. The king called this ship the Long Serpent ... The Long Serpent had thirty-four benches for rowers. The head and the arched tail were both gilt, and the bulwarks were as high as in sea-going ships. This ship was the best and most costly ship ever made in Norway."

— Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*



Pig Sticker

Worship Thor

Researched at Ox Cart

Improvement Increases gatherers' damage to animals while hunting

Tanngnjostr ("Teeth-grinder") and Tanngrisnir ("Teeth-barer") were the names of the two goats that drew Thor's chariot. Every night, if he wished, Thor could slaughter and eat these two for dinner. If he saved and buried their bones, the two goats would be fully restored when he awoke in the morning.

*"She set forth salvers
full, adorned with silver,
on the table game and pork,
and roasted birds.
In a can was wine;
the cups were ornamented.
They drank and talked;
the day was fast departing,
Rig would counsel
give to them both."*

—The Poetic Eddas, The Lay of Rig



Rime

Worship Skadi

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases Frost Giant hitpoints and attack

When Skadi came to confront the Aesir for killing her father they offered her three things: 1) to make her laugh; 2) that she be allowed to choose a husband from among the Aesir; and 3) that her father's eyes would be cast into the heavens as stars. The fierce frost giantess accepted and winter's wrath was turned aside.

*"From Elivagar
sprang venom drops,
which grew till they became a Jötun;
but sparks flew
from the south-world
to the ice the fire gave life."*

— The Poetic Eddas, The Lay of Vafthrudnir



Ring Giver

Worship Njord

Researched at Hill Fort

Improvement Increases Jarl hitpoints

Norse kings, or thanes, gave out rings to favored subjects as tokens of esteem. "Ring giver" is a kenning (a poetic expression) that means king.

*"The ring too I will give thee,
which was burnt
with the young son of Odin.
Eight of equal weight
will from it drop,
every ninth night."*

— The Poetic Eddas, The Lay of Skinir



Rampage

Worship Hel

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases myth unit creation speed drastically

*"Trembles Yggdrasil's
ash yet standing;
groans that aged tree,
and the Jötun is loosed.
Loud bays Garm
before the Gnupa-cave,
his bonds he rends asunder;
and the wolf runs."*

—The Poetic Eddas, The Vala's Prophecy



Safeguard

Worship Heimdall

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Increases hitpoints of walls and towers and reduces their cost

Heimdall was the watchman and guardian of the gods. He could hear the grass growing in the fields and seldom slept. It was his duty to give warning when enemies of the gods attacked, whom he alerted by blowing the horn Giallarhorn, which could be heard across the world.



Sons of Sleipnir

Worship Baldr

Researched at Longhouse

Improvement Increases speed of Raiding Cavalry

Sleipnir was Odin's horse, a son of Loki's by the great builder Svaldfari. Sleipnir had eight legs and was the swiftest horse ever known.

"Yggdrasil's ash is
of all trees most excellent,
and of all ships, Skidbladnir,
of the Aesir, Odin,
and of horses, Sleipnir,
Bifrost of bridges,
and of skalds, Bragi,
Habrok of hawks,
and of dogs, Garm
Brimir of swords."

— *The Poetic Eddas, The Lay of Vafthrudnir*



Swine Array

Worship Bragi

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Increases Ulfsark attack against cavalry

The swine array, or svynfylking, was a formation used by the Vikings and originally credited to Odin. Men would form a triangle, with the most heavily armored warriors in front, and perhaps archers in the rear ranks. The array could position spears against charging cavalry, or move forward to drive a wedge through enemy ranks. The array could be used alone, or in multiples with the rear ranks connecting to form a zig-zag frontage.



Thundering Hooves

Worship Freyja

Researched at Longhouse

Improvement Increases Cavalry speed and hitpoints

The Norse had many splendid horses throughout their mythology. Svaldfari, the horse that built the walls of Asgard; Skinfaxi and Hrimfaxi, who drew the Sun and Moon across the skies; Grani, Sigurd's horse, a son of Sleipnir—Grani feared nothing, not even fire and was "the best of all horses."

"Three troops of maidens;
though one maid foremost rode,
bright, with helmed head.
Their horses shook themselves,
and from their manes there sprang
dew into the deep dales,
hail on the lofty trees,
whence comes fruitfulness to man.
To me all that I saw was hateful."

— *The Poetic Eddas, The Lay of Helgi Hiorvard's Son*



Thurisaz Rune

Worship Bragi

Researched at Temple

Improvement Increases myth unit speed

This is the rune of frost giants, a group of fierce icy Jötun. It is also called Thurs and Thorn.

*"I saw those men
who much envy harbour
at another's fortune;
bloody runes
were on their breasts
graved painfully."*

— *The Poetic Eddas, The Song of the Sun*



Wrath of the Deep

Worship Njord

Researched at Dock

Improvement Increases Kraken hitpoints and attack

Aegir was a god of the ocean and his anger caused the seas to storm. He and his wife Ran hosted the rest of the Aesir in their hall quite frequently. Aegir and Ran had nine daughters—Bara, Blodughadda, Bylgia, Dufa, Himinglaeva, Hefring, Hronn, Kolga, and Unn. These daughters were the waves of the ocean.

*"Higher still bade Helgi
the deep sail be hauled.
No port gave shelter
to the crews;
when Aegir's
terrific daughter
the chieftains' vessels
would o'erwhelm."*

— *The Poetic Eddas, The First Lay of Helgi Hundingcide*



Winter Harvest

Worship Skadi

Researched at Town Center

Improvement Gatherers harvest food from farms faster

Skadi was a great huntress traveling from her icy home of Thrymheim on snowshoes, carrying a bow with which she brought down much game. After her stormy and eventually dissolved marriage to the Aesir Njord, she married Ull, the god of justice, skis, and agriculture.

*"A seventh I will sing to thee.
If on a mountain high
frost should assail thee,
deadly cold shall not
thy carcass injure,
nor draw thy body to thy limbs."*

— *The Poetic Eddas, The Lay of Hyndla*

Military Units

Infantry units

These units are your foot soldiers. Infantry units train quickly, are inexpensive to produce, and attack well in numbers.

Egyptian Infantry



Axemen

Created at Barracks

Strong vs Infantry

Weak vs Archers, Cavalry

Improvements Barracks, Armory

The Egyptian infantry are not the most powerful, but they are inexpensive to produce and can hold off enemy infantry until you can produce more powerful chariots.



Mercenaries

Created at Town Center

Strong vs Cavalry

Weak vs Archers

Egyptians can hire Mercenaries at any Town Center. Mercenaries train very quickly, cost only gold, and are good at countering cavalry. Their primary use is town defense because their services only last a short time. They rarely serve long enough to travel to an enemy town.



Spearmen

Created at Barracks

Strong vs Cavalry

Weak vs Archers

Improvements Barracks, Armory

Egyptian infantry are not very powerful, but they are inexpensive, and can help hold off enemy units until the Egyptians can train more powerful archers or chariots.

Greek Infantry



Hoplites

Created at Academy

Strong vs Cavalry

Weak vs Archers

Improvements Academy, Armory

Hoplites are expensive but powerful, especially against cavalry.

The main Greek soldier of antiquity was the Hoplite, named after the great round shield he carried into battle. Hoplites wore helmets, leg and chest armor, and carried long spears. They fought in dense columns with the spear points from several ranks projecting out from the formation. They presented a formidable block of bristling spears held above the shoulder. In battle they would close with the enemy as a pushing wall of shields, stabbing with their spears over the shields. Men behind would push those in front and stab over them. This fighting was face-to-face and terrifying, requiring high skill and discipline. Battles were usually short but deadly. Before the rise of the Hoplite, most army fighting had been more long-range archery and posturing. The Greeks made war personal and intense, and Hoplites dominated ancient battlefields for centuries.



Hypaspists

Created at Academy

Strong vs Infantry

Weak vs Archers, Cavalry

Improvements Academy, Armory

Hypaspists are inexpensive fighters that counter other infantry units.

Alexander's great army of conquest included three regiments of Hypaspists. These were apparently the best of his peasant infantry and of equal status and ability to his Foot Companions, most of noble blood. The Hypaspists were capable of fighting as traditional Hoplite infantry, or could switch to javelins and lighter armor for rapid movement in rough terrain. They were used to rapidly close with the enemy and fix them, allowing the companion cavalry to hit the enemy from a side or the rear.



Myrmidons

Created at Fortress

Strong vs Cavalry, Infantry

Weak vs Archers

Improvements Fortress, Armory

Myrmidons are Zeus's elite fortress unit. They are strong against Egyptian and Norse soldiers.

The Myrmidons come down to us from the Iliad and were reported to be a fierce tribe from Thessaly, in northern Greece. They were followers of Achilles and noted for carrying out his orders pitilessly and without question, no matter how cruel. Today the word has come to mean a subordinate who carries out orders without question.

Norse Infantry



Huskarls

Created at Hill Fort

Strong vs Archers

Weak vs Infantry, Cavalry

Improvements Longhouse, Hill Fort, Armory

Although most infantry are beaten by archers, the Norse Huskarls are the opposite. Their high-pierce armor means they can quickly close with enemy archers or even buildings that shoot arrows. They are weaker to other infantry and cavalry, and more expensive than other Norse infantry.

The name of this unit derives from an old Norse name for common household servants (house karl), but it later came to mean the elite household guards of a Viking lord. One Viking king in England required that a man have a gold-inlaid, two-handed sword to be considered for his Huskarls. These were the king's best professional troops, carrying the best equipment he could afford. Their sole duties were training, guard duty, and war. Although spearmen are generally regarded as the answer to enemy cavalry, the forest of upright spears could also do surprisingly well at stopping incoming arrows.



Throwing Axemen

Created at Longhouse

Strong vs Infantry

Weak vs Archers, Cavalry

Improvements Longhouse, Armory

Despite the fact that he uses a ranged weapon, the Throwing Axeman is an infantry unit and benefits from infantry upgrades. The Throwing Axeman is inexpensive and very effective against infantry units.

Little is known about how warriors fought using throwing axes, but we do know that at least one Germanic tribe, the Franks, derived their name from a knife or axe that they threw in battle. It is possible that they threw one weapon prior to joining hand-to-hand combat, at which point they switched to another axe or sword. Throwing a weapon just prior to close fighting may have wounded and shaken many of the enemy just before the moment of contact, giving an initial and perhaps decisive advantage to the throwers.



Ulfarks

Created at Town Center, Longhouse

Strong vs Cavalry

Weak vs Archers

Improvements Longhouse, Armory

Norse infantry are lightly armored but have a strong attack. The general-purpose Ulfarks form the backbone of a Norse army. They are particularly good at defeating cavalry.

Viking warriors who wore wolf skins into battle were known as Ulfarks, another tradition of the Bezerks (bear skins). These men were renowned for their tendency to go into battle frenzy. Ulfarks fought on foot, armed mainly with axes and swords. They generally wore minimal armor, preferring freedom of movement to heavier protection.

Archers

Archers attack from a distance. They are more lightly armored than infantry units and some of them have a minimum effective range. They generally do not fare well in hand-to-hand combat.

Archers are the most common ranged units in the game and are powerful against infantry and weak versus cavalry. They are more expensive to produce than infantry.

The Greek archers are the Toxotes, Peltast, and Gastraphetes (Hades.) Egyptian archers are the Chariot Archers and Slingers. The Norse have no archers and rely on the Throwing Axemen or Ballistae to attack at range.

Egyptian Archers



Chariot Archers

Created at Migdol Stronghold

Strong vs Infantry

Weak vs Cavalry

Improvements Migdol Stronghold, Armory

Egyptian Chariot Archers are a powerful unit and should be the backbone of an Egyptian army. They are fast, but not very effective against buildings or siege weapons.

From about 1,700–1,200 B.C., chariot archers dominated the battlefields of the Middle East and western India. The great civilizations of the time, principally the Egyptians and Hittites to the west, were sufficiently wealthy and advanced to field forces of these relatively expensive weapons. The elites of these cultures hunted from chariots, and archery skill was prized. Surrounding barbarians were intimidated by the fast and accurate archers until they learned how to kill the horses or otherwise disable the team. Around 1,200 B.C., chariot archers largely disappeared and barbarians, whose origin remains unknown, overran the cultures that used them.



Slingers

Created at Barracks

Strong vs Archers

Weak vs Cavalry

Improvements Barracks, Armory

Egyptian Slingers are effective against groups of ranged units, such as the Greek Toxotes. However, they are not very effective against buildings or siege weapons.

The sling was simply a long piece of cloth held on both ends with a stone in the center that could be swung rapidly. When one end was released, the stone missile was thrown with fairly high accuracy. Originally a hunting weapon for bringing down small game and birds, the sling was adapted easily to the battlefield where light troops used it to harass enemy formations. Slings were much less expensive than a bow and its complement of arrows, and slingers were easier to train than archers. Many ancient armies kept contingents of slingers to accompany their infantry and archer units.



Toxotes

Created at Archery Range

Strong vs Infantry

Weak vs Cavalry

Improvements Armory, Archery Range

Toxotes can devastate infantry but are vulnerable to fast moving units such as cavalry.

After centuries of warfare that was decided by Hoplite battle, the Greeks began using a variety of units after the superiority of combined arms was demonstrated convincingly by Philip's Macedonian army. The Greeks added light troops, mainly Peltasts and cavalry. They were slower to add archers, whom they called Toxotes, because they did not have the long tradition of archery practice that created bowmen of sufficient quality for the battlefield.



Peltasts

Created at Archery Range

Strong vs Archers

Weak vs Infantry, Cavalry

Improvements Armory, Archery Range

Greek counter-archers are effective against other archers, but weak against most other unit types.

Peltasts were light troops originally from Thrace (modern Serbia) who took their name from their light hide-covered shield called a pelta. They wore no armor, allowing them to move rapidly on the battlefield. Each man carried several javelins, usually one meter in length. Their battlefield role was to close with heavy and slow enemy formations, throw javelins into their midst, and pull back before the enemy could catch them. If Peltasts could attack phalanxes on the flanks, they could cause casualties and disrupt the formation before Hoplite battle was joined. The increasing use of light troops such as Peltasts eventually made armies composed entirely of Hoplites obsolete.

Greek Archers



Gastraphetes (Hades)

Created at Fortress

Strong vs Buildings

Weak vs Cavalry, counter archers

Improvements Armory, Archery Range

The archer of Hades is good against buildings and infantry.

This ancient ancestor to the mounted ballistae and medieval crossbow, was slow to fire but had great range. "Gastraphetes" literally means "belly bow," perhaps because it was cocked and fired while braced against the soldier's abdomen.

Cavalry Units

Cavalry are fast, mounted soldiers. In general, they are powerful against archers and weak versus infantry. Because of their mobility, they are more expensive than infantry.

The Greek cavalry are the Hippikons, Prodromos, and Hetairoi (Poseidon.) The Egyptian cavalry are the Camelry and the War Elephants. The Norse cavalry are Raiding Cavalry and the Jarls.

Egyptian Cavalry



Camelry

Created at Migdol Stronghold

Strong vs Cavalry, Archers

Weak vs Infantry

Improvements Migdol Stronghold, Armory

As the primary Egyptian cavalry, Camelry are good at countering cavalry and siege weapons, but are vulnerable to infantry.

Desert warriors of the Middle East employed camels mainly as dependable transport across the arid wastes of the region. Camels could carry moderate loads and up to two men. They had reasonable speed for short periods. Also, horses unfamiliar with camels shied away from them, making camelry particularly effective against horse-mounted troops.



War Elephants

Created at Migdol Stronghold

Strong vs Buildings

Weak vs Infantry

Improvements Migdol Stronghold, Armory

War Elephants are slow moving and expensive, but they are good at destroying buildings.

The generals of ancient times, tracing back at least to Hannibal, were intrigued by the use of elephants in battle. The size and strength of the beasts were enough to shake any troops, but especially those who had never seen the animal before. In practice, elephants may have been more for show than effectiveness. Wounded elephants were difficult to control and likely to disrupt friends as much as foes. They were used as platforms for commanders and archers, and were ideal for breaking into dense enemy formations if they could be coaxed to do so. While the Indians first introduced elephants to the Mediterranean, the Ptolemies of Egypt were the first to use the larger African elephants in warfare. Classical texts are very clear that generals knew to counter war elephants with pigs.

Greek Cavalry



Hetairoi (Poseidon)

Created at Fortress

Strong vs Buildings, Archers

Weak vs Infantry

Improvements Stable, Armory

The Hetairoi were the elite Hippikons. Their primary purpose is to destroy enemy buildings. They are available only to worshipers of Poseidon.



Hippikons

Created at Stable

Strong vs Archers, Siege Units

Weak vs Infantry

Improvements Stable, Armory

Greek cavalry are expensive and slow, but powerful. Cavalry are strong against archers and can strike quickly against siege weapons, but are weaker against infantry.

Greek cavalry, other than the scouts or elite Hetairoi, were called Hippikons. The classic Greeks had foregone cavalry in favor of armies consisting entirely of Hoplite infantry. After the rise of Macedonia, the use of other arms was evident. Hippikon cavalry and light troops were raised to support the Hoplite infantry.



Prodromos

Created at Stable

Strong vs Cavalry

Weak vs Archers, Infantry

Improvements Stable, Armory

Greek counter-cavalry are strong against other cavalry—such as Hippikons, Raiding Cavalry, and Jarls—but weak against other unit types.

The Prodromos were a light cavalry unit within the heavy Macedonian cavalry (Hetairoi or Companions) of Alexander the Great's army. These men were armed with javelins or a shortened cavalry spear, plus a sword as their secondary weapon. They scouted for the army but were used in battle with the heavier Companions when needed. They were particularly useful in battle during the pursuit of broken enemy troops that could be run down while fleeing.

Norse Cavalry



Raiding Cavalry

Created at Longhouse

Strong vs Archers

Weak vs Infantry, Cavalry

Improvements Longhouse, Armory

Norse Raiding Cavalry are fast, but lack the strength of more expensive cavalry. Raiding Cavalry are the best Norse response to archers until stronger units become available.

These mounted warriors were especially suited for striking enemies quickly and without warning. Cavalry used as raiders were difficult to defend against because they could strike anywhere and disappear quickly. They were good for disrupting economies, looting or destroying goods, and wreaking havoc. Because they were not equipped with heavy armor and weapons, speed was their strength. They usually were not expected to fight in battle against enemy troops.



Jarls

Created at Hill Fort

Strong vs Myth Units, Archers

Weak vs Infantry

Improvements Longhouse, Hill Fort, Armory

The Norse Jarls are a mighty cavalry unit—slow and expensive, but powerful in combat. Although they aren't as good as Hersirs at combating myth units, Jarls can inflict some bonus damage against them.

The high-ranking men who owned substantial land were called Jarls, a word possibly related to the Anglo-Saxon word that became earl. Because of their wealth and elite status, they possessed the best equipment. They owed allegiance to their superiors and were expected to fight on their behalf. For this reason, and their own interest in martial affairs, they were elite warriors—often trained from childhood.

Siege Units

Siege weapons can destroy buildings, but are weak against other units, especially cavalry.

Egyptian Siege Units



Catapult

Created at Siege Works

Strong vs Buildings, Ships

Weak vs Cavalry

Improvements Siege Works

Egyptians can use Catapults to defeat enemy ships and destroy buildings.

Catapults were invented by the Greeks for use as artillery on the battlefield or during a siege. Creating tension by pulling back large bow-like arms or by twisting cordage made of hides or hair, a great throwing force could be achieved. Catapults could throw a stone weighing over 10 pounds to a range of nearly 1,500 feet.



Siege Tower

Created at Siege Works

Strong vs Buildings

Weak vs Cavalry

Improvements Siege Works

Siege Towers can transport units, fire arrows, and ram buildings. Counter them with cavalry.

One of the machines developed to attack walled towns was a siege tower on wheels. This large wooden tower was covered with wet hides to minimize its vulnerability to fire. A battering ram was suspended inside for use against the wall that the tower was moved against. The tower protected the men working the ram and other men shooting arrows into the town. When the wall was knocked down by the ram, the attacking army could enter the city.

Greek Siege Units



Petrobolos

Created at Fortress

Strong vs Buildings, Ships

Weak vs Cavalry, Infantry

Improvements Fortress

Greek catapults are best used against enemy ships and buildings.

The most common catapult used anciently was a traction catapult built by the Greeks and called a Petrobolos. The power of the arm was generated by traction, usually by pulling or winding down a balanced throwing arm. The best Petrobolos of the age threw stones weighing approximately 125 pounds. Rocks of this weight plunging down on walls and buildings were capable of devastating damage.



Helepolis

Created at Fortress

Strong vs Buildings

Weak vs Cavalry

Improvements Fortress

This rolling siege tower is mounted with balistae and can transport your troops in safety.

The name of this siege machine translates as “take of cities.” The name was first applied to a mobile tower constructed by Greeks to attack a city on Cyprus. This large movable tower mounted stone throwers and ballistae of different sizes, with the smallest at the top. Two hundred men pushed the tower up to the enemy walls using parallel beams extending out from the bottom of the tower. The larger weapons in the machine battered the walls while the smaller ones swept defenders off the walls in preparation for an assault.

Norse Siege Units



Portable Ram

Created at Hill Fort

Strong vs Buildings

Weak vs Cavalry, Infantry

Improvements Hill Fort

The high pierce armor of the soldiers carrying these rams protects them from enemy archers while they knock down walls and buildings.

When taking an enemy town quickly was important, one simple expedient was to cut down a strong tree, trim the trunk, attach some handholds, and then use the tree to batter down a gate or wall section. Although very dangerous work for the men holding the ram, it could be put into action within hours of arriving outside the city walls. The portable ram was particularly effective in surprise attacks and against fortifications of weak design. Such a ram was popular with raiding armies and those who could not linger outside a city for a protracted siege.



Ballista

Created at Hill Fort

Strong vs Infantry, Ships, Buildings

Weak vs Cavalry

Improvements Hill Fort

A Ballista can be used to defeat ships, infantry, and buildings.

The Ballista was a type of pre-gunpowder-era artillery, mainly used against men in formation. It was a large bow mounted sideways. It used a winch and ratchet to create bow tension. The missile was usually a large metal or metal-headed bolt. Fired into a mass of people at ranges up to 1,000 feet, bolts could disable several enemies.

Ballistae could be placed on fixed mounts on walls or ships, or on mobile-wheeled mounts for battlefield use. They were not particularly effective against fortified buildings and walls.

Naval Units

Naval units allow you to expand your civilization across the sea or pound enemy cities from the relative safety of the water. All civilizations can create fishing and transport ships as well as three types of military vessels: archer ships, hammer or ramming ships, and siege ships.



Fishing Ship

Created at Dock

Improvements Dock

Use the Fishing Ship to gather food from offshore fish shoals. In Age of Mythology, fish from shoals are never depleted through over fishing.



Transport Ship

Created at Dock

Improvements Dock

Transport Ships carry your forces across bodies of water. They have no attack and are vulnerable to archer or siege ships. When sunk, all units aboard are lost.

Egyptian Naval Units



Kebenit

Created at Dock

Strong vs Ramming Ships

Weak vs Siege Ships

Improvements Dock, Armory

Kebenits can fiercely attack ramming ships, but are vulnerable to siege ships.



Ramming Galley

Created at Dock

Strong vs Siege Ships

Weak vs Archer Ships

Improvements Dock

This hammer ship is good at smashing enemy siege ships.



War Barge

Created at Dock

Strong vs Buildings, Archer Ships

Weak vs Ramming Ships

Improvements Dock

The Egyptian siege ship—or War Barge—fires a volley of stones that devastates enemy buildings and archer ships.

Norse Naval Units



Longboat

Created at Dock

Strong vs Buildings, Hammer Ships

Weak vs Siege Ships

Improvements Dock

The Longboat is the archer ship in the Norse navy. As with other naval archers, it is strong against hammer ships, but it can also inflict bonus damage to buildings. It generates favor more quickly in combat.



Dragon Ship

Created at Dock

Strong vs Buildings, Archer Ships

Weak vs Ramming Ships

Improvements Dock

The Norse siege ship—or Dragon Ship—is strong against buildings and archer ships, but vulnerable to ramming ships.



Drakkar

Created at Dock

Strong vs Siege Ships

Weak vs Archer Ships

Improvements Dock

The Norse ramming ship—or Drakkar—is good against siege ships, but archer ships can sink it quickly.

Greek Naval Units



Trireme

Created at Dock

Strong vs Hammer Ships

Weak vs Siege Ships

Improvements Dock

The Trireme is an archer ship best used against hammer ships.



Juggernaut

Created at Dock

Strong vs Archer Ships, Buildings

Weak vs Ramming Ships

Improvements Dock

The Juggernaut is the Greek siege ship. It deals tremendous damage to archer ships and buildings, but is vulnerable to ramming ships.



Pentekonter

Created at Dock

Strong vs Siege Ships

Weak vs Archer Ships

Improvements Dock

The Pentekonter is a hammer ship and is strong against siege ships.

Mythology

In the age when mythology reigned, the history of gods mirrored the history of humankind: some were cruel, greedy, and mischievous—truly gods to be feared. Others were protective, generous, and trustworthy, showering their subjects with bounty. And some gods were less predictable, a volatile combination of opposing forces.

The gods of this age were not infallible—they had strengths and weaknesses just like the mortals who worshipped them. And like all men and all civilizations, they were born and they died.

But their legends endure. Though in the ages of their evolution many contradictions and inconsistencies emerged, the legends still open a window to the past that is worth peering into.

The Egyptian Gods

Before there was air, earth, or even sky, there was only water—turbulent, bubbling water from which the first god, Ra, arose.

Ra transformed into a new element in the cosmos, the sun. But the paucity of other life soon weighed heavily upon him, and so through communion with his own shadow, he sired a daughter, Tefnut. She also was a new element—moisture. And Ra's other child, Shu, became the air. They in turn had offspring of their own, Geb and Nut (the earth and sky). Soon an entire cosmological order had been established. But with it came unforeseen challenges.

Soon Ra found himself forced into daily battle with the serpent Apep for control of the atmosphere. Enlisting the help of wife and daughter Bast (goddess of cats and fertility), Ra was successful on most days. But on days when Apep prevailed, storms and foul weather were the rule.

This was the mere beginning of what Ra would contend with. The frustrations of lording over a human population that was prone to complaint and rebellion once led Ra, in a fit of anger, to cast one of his eyes out and hurl it toward the earth. The eye transformed into the goddess of vengeance Sekhmet, a force so destructive toward humanity that a remorseful Ra had to recall her via trickery. Ra ordered his servants to create thousands of

vessels of beer. The beer would be mixed with pomegranate juice to appear like the blood of her human victims and used to flood the field surrounding her earthly abode.

The plan worked. When Sekhmet next emerged to finish slaughtering humankind, she caught her reflection in the gruesome red lake, fell in love with it, and drank the mixture, falling asleep harmlessly. It worked so well that she was eventually made wife of Ptah (the very god of creation). And later, ironically, she transformed into Hathor, goddess of love and celebration.

Still, taking responsibility for the entire cosmos was beginning to tax Ra's vitality. As he grew older, Ra looked for a replacement for his duties overseeing the earth. It would be his great-grandson, Osiris.

Osiris (along with Isis, Set, and Nephthys) had been brought into the world through the union of Geb and Nut. But when Ra left dominion of the world to Osiris, the first sibling rivalry in cosmos history took place—and what a rivalry!

Osiris had been a benevolent dictator—under his rule the men of Egypt became civilized. But brother Set (the god of chaos and storms) was jealous of the favor shown Osiris, and murdered him. He constructed an elaborate chest and held a party, telling all his siblings that whoever fit into it could keep it for their own. But he had built the beautiful casket with but one of them in mind: Osiris. And when Osiris climbed in, Set had it sealed and his conspirators sent it down the Nile, hoping it would never be seen again.

Thus Osiris was the first god in history to die, and became the first god of the underworld. When Nephthys told her sister, Isis, of the murder, Isis became grief-stricken, for Osiris was her husband as well as her brother. She found the body and was even successful in reviving Osiris, and together they had a son, Horus. But Set soon discovered this and, enraged, ripped Osiris into 14 pieces, scattering the parts over Egypt so that even Isis could not piece them together. Anubis, inventor of embalming and son of Osiris, performed the funeral in the great pyramid.

Set was now lord of the world, and given his proclivity for chaos and violence, it seemed as if all of Osiris's good works would soon be reversed. Set was even said to be plotting an overthrow of his father Ra.

In response, Ra and Horus amassed a great army to overthrow Set's rule. They enlisted Thoth, god of wisdom and truth, who transformed Horus into a sun-disk with a heat so intense it confounded Set's armies, and they destroyed one another.

But Set himself was nowhere to be found. He had gone into hiding a great distance away, where he was free to form yet another force with which to defeat Ra and Horus.

But it was not to be. And with eventual defeat, Horus dismembered Set much the way his father had been. Thus Horus came to rule the world and set the precedent for the pharaohs who followed.

The Greek Gods

Gaea, or the earth, was the first deity of the Greek cosmological order, born of the chaos that reigned before life. She gave birth to Uranus (the heavens), and together they conceived giants, cyclopes, and titans. Uranus was not pleased with his monstrous offspring, so he locked all his children away deep within the earth.

And Gaea was not pleased with Uranus for this. So she enlisted the titan Kronos to attack his ungrateful father and seize power. But Kronos was an even less tolerant father than Uranus, and was soon dealt the same blow by his own son Zeus. And with Zeus's ascension to power, so begins the Greek era of the Olympians.

Now controlling the entire cosmos, Zeus decided to divide the spoils between his brothers Poseidon and Hades. The drawing of lots decided that Zeus would retain his title as ruler of the gods, while Poseidon would take possession of the seas. Hades was left with control of the underworld, and felt slighted, but there he ruled nonetheless, an angry and jealous deity.

Meanwhile, Zeus's marriage to Hera (the goddess of marriage and community) was not going well. His many affairs left her as angry and jealous as Hades, but she never openly challenged Zeus, and took her frustrations out upon other enemies instead.

Still, the pair had many children. Zeus showed open favoritism toward Athena, who became the goddess of wisdom and warfare. Unlike her brother Ares (the god of warfare), Athena was judicious and benevolent, choosing her battles to promote civilization and advancement. To Ares

it was irrelevant which side prevailed in a battle; he only wanted ample bloodshed to assuage a violent nature. Ares even took his children—Phobos (fear), Deimos (terror), and Enyo (horror)—into battle with him.

But Ares was cowardly and quick to flee when things turned against him, and was even publicly mocked by his own brother Hephaestus.

Hephaestus (god of the forge and blacksmiths) had caught Ares having an affair with his wife. While said to be the ugliest of all deities, somehow Hephaestus married Aphrodite, the very goddess of love and beauty. But she rarely reciprocated his love, preferring instead the war god Ares.

Meanwhile, Zeus continued to have extramarital trysts of his own, many of which bore offspring—most famously Artemis (goddess of archery) and Apollo. God of wisdom, truth, music, the sun, and —among other things—healing, Apollo proved to be one of the most revered Olympians. A childhood act of goodwill set the precedent for Apollo: a giant serpent called Python greedily guarded the Oracle at Delphi (a well from which sprang prophecies of the future). The serpent ravaged the nearby countryside, poisoning rivers and wells, destroying crops, and razing entire villages. The young Apollo defeated Python and liberated the Oracle.

Despite his good nature, Apollo was not always treated with respect, especially by his half-brother Hermes. Fleet of foot with winged sandals, Hermes was the messenger to all Olympian gods. But he was mischievous as well—and even while still wrapped in swaddling, he stole cattle from Apollo. Apollo demanded their return, but ended up giving in to Hermes as a result of his skill on the lyre. Hermes thus became the god of music.

In any case, Zeus did not limit his trysts to goddesses—mortal women also appealed to him. One such mortal was Semele, whom Zeus “visited” in the night as a divine presence. Semele did not know who the father was, but was pleased to have coupled with deity, and bore the child Dionysus, god of wine and celebration.

This naturally disturbed Hera, whose jealousies over Zeus's affairs never abated. She convinced Semele to uncover who the father was, even while knowing that no mortal woman could survive an encounter seeing Zeus in the flesh. Semele was killed.

But Hera was not yet satiated, and even had Dionysus murdered. Rhea brought him back to life and Zeus was forced to enrage Hera further by extending Dionysus divine protection.

The Norse Gods

In the beginning, Norse legend has it that there was nothing but fire and ice. Slowly these two forces forged two beings: Ymir the giant and Audhumla the cow. Audhumla subsisted by licking the salty ice, while Ymir survived off Audhumla's milk. Eventually the cow's incessant licking freed up a creature from the ice, the god Bor. Bor would father many other deities, but none would be more important than Odin.

Odin was to become the ruler of all Norse gods—as well as the embodiment of all knowledge. This he accomplished by trading his right eye with a giant called Mime in exchange for access to the fountains of wisdom. Later, when Mime was decapitated in battle, Odin anointed the skull with herbs and revived it, keeping Mime's severed head at his side for his invaluable counsel.

While Odin sired many children, it was the consummation of his marriage to the goddess Frigg that produced the greatest diversity of gods, from the stately and eloquent Bragi (god of poetry) to the most powerful of all Norse deities—Thor, god of thunder.

Thor was fearless in battle, owing largely to his choice of weaponry—an astonishingly powerful hammer he called Mjolnir. When thrown, Mjolnir would always return to Thor, but not before casting great swaths of lightning across the northern skies.

When Thrym, king of all giants in the faraway land of Jotunheim, heard of the hammer he had to possess it. But the vengeance for stealing Thor's hammer would be quick and merciless. Thrym had demanded ransom for the hammer's return—and the ransom was the goddess Freyja, Thor's mother.

Thor was enraged, but Heimdall, guardian of the Rainbow Bridge and keeper of the keenest senses of all gods, had a plan: Thor would wear a woman's dress to Jotunheim, land of the giants, and convince Thrym that he was Freyja. Thor at first refused but eventually put on one of Freyja's gowns and went to Jotunheim. When a very pleased Thrym presented the hammer in trade to whom he thought was Freyja, Thor swung it so mightily that the great giant was slain in a single blow. No one would again attempt such a ploy on the powerful Thor.

Although ruthless in battle, Thor was a protective warrior, having inherited his war-god status from Tyr (the most heroic and benevolent of all Norse war deities). Thor's rage might be terrible and absolute, but it was generally directed at those who would threaten humankind or the gods.

Baldr, on the other hand, couldn't have been a more different son for Odin than Thor. Temperate and gentle, Baldr was considered the god of beauty and wisdom. But he was plagued with nightmares and fears of death to the extent that his mother, the goddess Frigg, demanded that everyone and every living thing on earth swear to never do him harm. But Frigg forgot to tell the tiny, seemingly insignificant plant mistletoe, and this was to be Baldr's undoing.

As the story goes, the god Loki constructed an arrow of mistletoe, and then tricked Baldr's own brother (the blind war god Hod) into slaying Baldr. For this Loki was imprisoned beneath a giant serpent, which dripped acidic poison down onto his face. (The pain was so intense that Loki's writhing shook the earth, thus creating earthquakes.) Meanwhile, Frigg petitioned Hel, daughter of Loki and goddess of the underworld, to restore Baldr's life. Hel declared that first every thing on earth must shed tears for his death, in the same manner Frigg had demanded they protect him.

It certainly was possible. After all, Baldr was a popular god—the winter goddess Skadi was duped into an unhappy union with another god while trying to win Baldr's hand.

Yet despite his popularity, Hel's declaration never came to pass. Yet Baldr had a son, Forseti, the god of justice. From the elaborately decorated halls of his gold and silver palace, Forseti settled all disputes and continued to uphold the legend of his beloved father, Baldr.

The Norse gods were destined to be destroyed on the day of Ragnarok in battle against their enemies, the giants.